

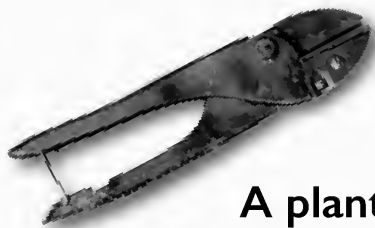
# Australian Garden HISTORY

vol 28 no 4 April 2017



A modern-day plant hunter  
Campaign for an avenue of honour  
Betty Quelhurst's floral carpets

JOURNAL OF THE AUSTRALIAN GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY



# Snippets

## A plant society turns 90

How do you feel about cactuses (or cacti)? Cactuses and succulents have been a component of many Australian botanic gardens – as elsewhere in the world – for a considerable time. They feature in botanic garden plantings in Melbourne (on the restored Guilfoyle Volcano), for example, and in Brisbane (which has an arid zone and cactus house) and Sydney.

This month the Cactus and Succulent Society of Australia celebrates its 90th anniversary. There was a hiatus between the society's foundation and its reactivation in the postwar years. This was when the journal *The Spine* began, in the late 1940s. Its first editor was Les Fuaux of Rosanna, in Melbourne. Fuaux also did the cover artwork and design for *The Spine*. His first covers were inspired by a seedling of *Astrophytum ornatum*, a cactus endemic to Mexico's central plateau. It was an eye-catching design, and in fact still is, some 70 years on. An early issue of *The Spine* was featured in the State Library of New South Wales's major 2016–17 exhibition, 'Planting Dreams', curated by AGHS's Richard Aitken.

After Fuaux disagreed with the committee and resigned as editor, he went on to found the Fuaux Herbarium, producing five volumes of the *Fuaux Herbarium Bulletin*. In 1986, almost 40 years after his work on *The Spine*, Fuaux noted that the seedling he had used for the original drawing was now a large plant three-quarters of a metre high.

### Australian cactus gardens

The popularity of cactuses and succulents in the 1950s and 1960s saw a rise in the number of public gardens and nurseries growing them. One cactus garden fondly remembered by travellers was the Arizona Cactus Ranch Garden in Windsor, South Australia, started by Joe Lowey in the early 1950s. It covered about three acres and featured 50 or 60 varieties of cactus.

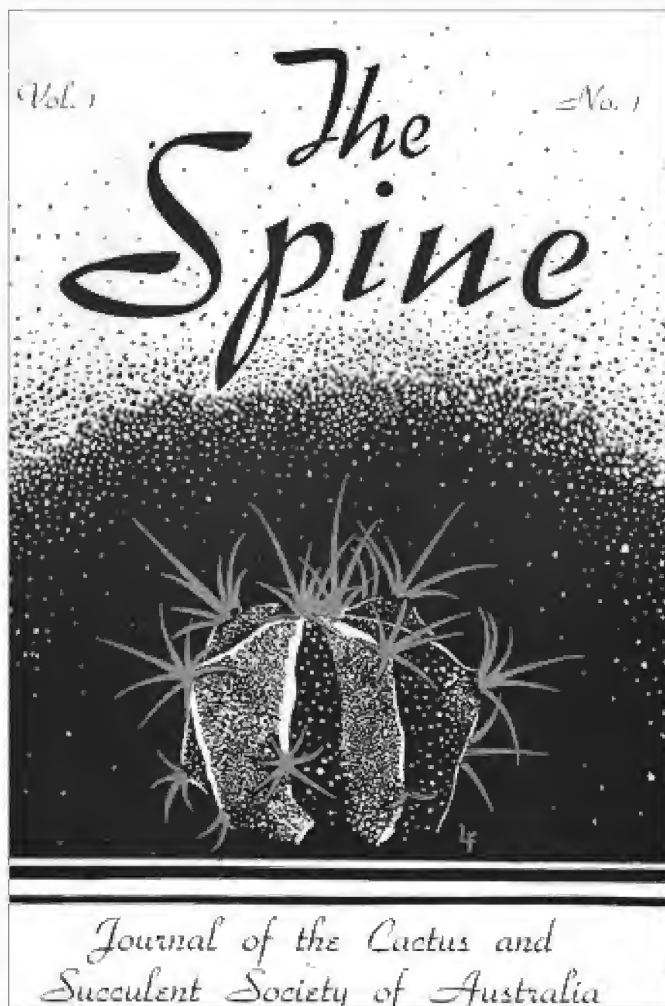
Thomas Dawson and Justin Gill's cactus nursery in White Hills, Bendigo, opened as a commercial nursery in the 1930s and is now heritage-listed. Several other large cactus gardens are routinely open to the public. Orana Cactus World at Gilgandra in NSW began in the early 1970s, and the six-acre Cactus Country at Strathmerton, northern Victoria, which opened to the public in the late 1980s, holds Australia's largest cactus and succulent collection.

Top: Issue 1 of volume 1, *The Spine*, journal of the Cactus and Succulent Society of Australia. courtesy Brett Anderson

Bottom: A colourful display in a children's 'underwater' garden at Cactus Country, Strathmerton, Victoria. photo Bernadette Hince

**Cover:** Modern plant hunter Alistair Watt's story begins on page 13 in this issue. The striking large shrub or tree *Carpolepis laurifolia* is one of many species he has found during botanical expeditions. It was introduced into Australia from New Caledonia in 1994, and is now in cultivation and thriving in southern Victoria.

photo Alistair Watt



### Acknowledgement

The Snipper thanks the secretary of the Cactus and Succulent Society of Australia, Brett Anderson, for drawing its 90th anniversary to our notice, and for his considerable assistance with history and images.

### References

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# Editorial

Richard Heathcote, Chairman, AGHS

By the time you receive this issue of *Australian Garden History*, you will probably have heard the news of the cancellation of AGHS's proposed New Zealand conference in October. As many AGHS members will know, our national committee was faced with various problems associated with this event. Essentially, they involved continued difficulties in our negotiations with a commercial company, and potential budget problems and financial losses flowing on from these difficulties. As a result, there was no option but to cancel the New Zealand-based conference for 2017, a decision as disappointing for our committee as we know it will be for the members. We are unreservedly sorry that this cancellation may affect plans for your year ahead.

We are doing everything we can to retain the trans-Tasman impetus which led to the proposed conference in the first place. AGHS acknowledges with gratitude the enormous amount of effort put into the proposed NZ meeting by our Australian members and our colleagues and friends in New Zealand over the past two years and more. We very much want to develop the valuable links built up with New Zealanders with garden history interests during the process, and – if possible – to run a New Zealand conference at a later date. We deeply regret that we have had to cancel the 2017 conference. Please be assured that we have the future of the society ever in mind. Its continuing financial viability is part of that vigilance.

However, all is not lost for 2017 national meetings! There will now be a national AGHS meeting in Melbourne in late October 2017, organised with the assistance of the Victorian branch committee. In addition, a tour of New Zealand's South Island with Lynne Walker will be offered after the conference (see AGHS news, back cover, for more on both of these activities).

Earlier this year we heard the sad news of the death of James Oswald Fairfax AC, who had been a member since the beginning of AGHS. Two things will give us joy in remembering this generous, cultured man and his passion for gardens: he has left Retford Park, his historic home in Bowral, to be held by the National Trust so that the house and garden can be preserved and enjoyed by all Australians.

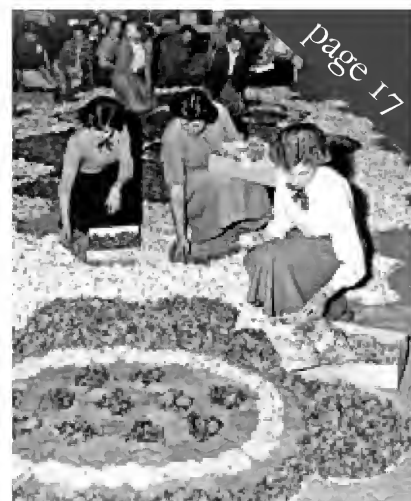
He has also left a generous bequest of \$10,000 to AGHS. This will be placed in the Kindred Spirits Fund set up by two other prominent supporters of AGHS, Margaret Darling AM and Joan Law-Smith. Both women were patrons of the society. Their forethought and generosity enabled AGHS to publish the book *Kindred Spirits*. Proceeds from the sale of this book are the basis of the fund that now enables us to undertake projects and other publishing ventures.

Looking ahead, the society has begun planning for the program to celebrate the 40th anniversary of our formation, an anniversary which will take place in 2020. It will be a significant milestone in our history and a great opportunity to attract interest from a wider audience. James Fairfax's bequest to AGHS is a wonderful beginning to fundraising efforts for our 40th Anniversary Appeal to be launched later this year (through bequests and tax deductible donations).

I will keep you in touch with plans as they take shape to honour the past and imagine the future.

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Gemma Starr

## *Campaign for an avenue of honour*

One full century after the children's first tree plantings at Bendigo East primary school's 'Anzac Avenue', this historically significant avenue was destroyed.

photo Gemma Starr

Almost half of Australia's avenues of honour are in Victoria. Until 9 August 2016, Bendigo East's 'Anzac Avenue' remained the earliest surviving example of these Victorian avenues. This article discusses the history of state primary school Bendigo East's 'Anzac Avenue' and the author's two-year campaign to preserve this very early avenue of honour. It puts the Education Department's Anzac Avenue planting initiative into the context of Victorian state school responses to World War I.

The Victorian Director of Education Mr Frank Tate (director 1902–28) was heavily involved in Australia's World War I efforts. He felt a deep loyalty to the British Empire. Two of his own sons enlisted and although his own desire to enlist remained unfulfilled, he made it his business to

ensure that World War I was fully supported from home. To do this, Tate devised the Victorian Education Department's War Relief Movement, a fund-raising program which involved every state school in Victoria. Its primary purposes were for schoolchildren to support soldiers abroad, to assist bereaved families, and to aid those men who returned home.

Tate's personal view, which underpinned this movement, was clearly stated in the monthly teachers' magazine, the *Education Gazette and Teacher's Aid* (later the *Schools Bulletin*) of 18 May 1916 (p 118).

*The debt to our soldiers and their dependents cannot be discharged by the present generation of adults. The children now in the schools must, ere long, take up our obligation and discharge it.*



The *Gazette* outlined specific fund-raising activities which schools were expected to be involved in, including flower days, sale of Anzac medallions and war certificates, bazaars and fresh produce stalls. School children were also directed to make soldiers' comfort items which were distributed overseas. The monetary efforts of each Victorian state school were regularly tallied and published. For several years, schools were under constant and public pressure to fundraise for this War Relief Fund.

## 1916 Anzac Avenue planting initiative

The *Gazette* also prescribed military commemorative activities that every state school was expected to be involved in. One of the most significant of these was the 1916 Arbor Day 'Anzac Avenue' tree planting.

Specific dates were given to schools, starting from 9 June – 14 July 1916, to ensure efficient state-wide tree planting.

## Bendigo East 1916 Anzac Avenue planting

Although Bendigo East state school was officially opened only in April 1916, the school committee swiftly answered the Education Department's call to plant their Anzac Avenue on Arbor Day 16 June 1916.

Arbor Day was a formal event at Bendigo East. Distinguished guests Major Beebe, Lieutenant Gilbert Dyett, Luke Clough MLA and Mr Arthur Rumball spoke and planted trees. The *Bendigo Independent* of 17 June 1916 reported that 'the row of trees leading from the gate to the school was named Anzac Avenue in honour of the brave boys, who have gone to the front'.

According to the *Bendigonian* of 22 June 1916, Major Beebe planted the first tree, a flowering gum.

**ARBOR DAY, 1916: ANZAC AVENUES.**  
In connexion with the instructions for the celebration of Arbor Day, 1916, published on page 76 of last month's number of this paper, the valuable suggestion has been made by Mr. Donald Fraser, an inspector of schools in New South Wales, that, to commemorate the landing of the Australian and New Zealand soldiers at Gallipoli, avenues of native trees should be planted on the coming Arbor Day. On Anzac Day, an "Anzac avenue" was established in the Domain, Melbourne, and there is no reason why every school should not have its leafy memorial in honor of the brave dead. If there is not room in the school playground, the planting could, with the consent and co-operation of local authorities, be carried out in a public reserve, or alongside some road in the vicinity of the school.

Notice in the Education Department, Education Gazette and Teachers' Aid, 18 May 1916.



He was followed by visitors and parents. Dyett, who later became RSL's longest serving national president and was knighted in 1934, 'let the boys know they were not forgotten by planting an Australian Wattle in their memory' (*Bendigo Independent* 17 June 1916).

A total of 16 trees were planted on that day for 'Messrs. Tattersall, Newman, Emonson, Foley, Moog, Loy, Lyle, Johnson, Whitting, O'Brien, Flack, O'Donnell, C. Wright (3 brothers) and Sanderson'.

Evidence from early newspaper reports and site inspections confirms that Bendigo East's Avenue of Honour was planted with native Australian trees. Original trees included sugar gums which were planted beside wattles or flowering gums in a regular pattern. Yellow gums (*Eucalyptus leucoxylon*) and a red ironbark were later confirmed to be replacement trees planted around 1965.

## Later plantings

The Bendigo East Avenue of Honour was planted in mid-1916. Additional trees were added to the avenue as the war progressed and new soldier names were forwarded to the school committee. Parents of soldiers planted several Avenue trees a year later, on Arbor Day 1917 (*Bendigo Independent* 16 June 1917).

Above: Roll of Honour. Twenty-seven out of the thirty original copper name plaques which had been on metal posts in front of the avenue trees. Plaques were removed and placed on this large wooden board for safe keeping just before 1965 after the avenue trees had grown significantly and a few plaques had fallen off their metal posts.

photo Gemma Starr

Left: 1916 Anzac Avenue notice, Victorian Education Department magazine. photo Gemma Starr



Aerial view of the school and avenue, 1967. The avenue was highly intact during this time and even later in 1980.

Source: Heritage Victoria submission 2016

According to 1920 Victorian Public Record Office documents of the school committee, avenue trees were initially named in 'lead pencil on rough board'. Several requests were made to the Education Department for permission to use school funding to purchase proper soldier nameplates but such requests were denied. Bendigo East must have managed to fundraise for the plaques, however, as on 11 December 1920 the avenue trees were officially named with copper plaques on metal posts. On this day, trees were named for 22 locally enlisted soldiers, men including former politician AJ Hampson, and Keith Emonson (future long time president of the 38th Battalion Social Club).

The final eight trees in Bendigo East's avenue of honour were added at a rain-delayed Arbor Day planting in 1921, making a total of 30 trees, one for each man who had enlisted from the district.

Eleven soldiers never returned home. The importance of the avenue trees for relatives of these fallen men cannot be overstated. These precious trees became the closest such families would ever get to their loved ones' graves or memorials. Bodies of these men would remain forever on foreign land.

A 1947 aerial photo shows that some of the avenue trees had died, leaving regular gaps. It is likely that shorter living wattles had grown in these areas. New trees were soon planted and according to later aerial photos, the Bendigo East Avenue appeared to be a highly intact avenue in both 1967 and 1980.

Some avenue trees and bushes were removed in 2014, just before lodgement of the permit application. By 2016, only seven trees (two of them stumps) remained in the avenue.

## The preservation campaign

My decision to campaign to help protect Bendigo East's Avenue of Honour was based on my recognition of the importance of this military commemorative and educational history. It was also simply from respect for those men from my neighbourhood who served in World War I.

It began in May 2014 after a conversation with a neighbour who had been living alongside the school site for 45 years. He informed me that the school's avenue of honour still existed and pointed out the avenue trees lining the pedestrian pathway. I was most surprised, since I had received notice of a planning application to subdivide the block into seven lots and remove all native vegetation, including these avenue trees. Consequently, I and three neighbours objected to these plans.

Despite our objections, City of Greater Bendigo Council unanimously voted to grant the planning permit. This decision was based on a 2013–14 heritage study which inaccurately stated that Bendigo East's avenue of honour had already been removed. According to this study, the only heritage element left on site was the c. 1915 school building, and it was to be protected by a new 'heritage overlay'. (Heritage overlays are part of local council planning schemes, designed to help protect the heritage of a local area; they include places of local significance as well as those included in the Victorian Heritage Register). The officer's report to councillors repeated this misinformation and omitted objectors' concerns about the future removal of the surviving avenue.

Appalled by the council's decision to grant a permit and their indifference towards Bendigo East's avenue of honour, I lodged an application to VCAT (the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal) to review this decision. Eighteen months after the initial objection, on 1 August 2016 VCAT refused to grant a permit, on the grounds that the subdivision had failed to



Another view of the destruction of Bendigo East's 'Anzac Avenue' plantings, 2016. This photo highlights the lack of respect for this important educational history and these highly significant trees.  
photo Gemma Starr

address the site's key heritage elements, which included both school building and avenue of honour.

Unfortunately, this was not enough to save the avenue trees. An earlier council decision had sealed these commemorative trees' fate.

## Previous hearings

Before the July 2016 VCAT hearing, I had been involved in two earlier hearings to help preserve the avenue. The first was an assessment of council's proposed heritage overlay (HO891) by an independent planning panel in May 2015. This panel found that council's HO891 was inadequate in protecting the full heritage values of the site (both avenue and school building) and recommended that the avenue trees be included in an 'extended' heritage overlay. Despite this positive outcome, Bendigo councillors still voted for council's original HO891 which completely excluded the avenue trees.

A second opportunity for legal protection of the Bendigo East avenue of honour happened a year later with a Heritage Council of Victoria registration hearing in May 2016. Following nomination by Victorian National Trust, the avenue of honour site was assessed for inclusion on the Victorian Heritage Register. Despite extensive submissions, the site was excluded from the register. Interestingly, no equivalent site representing this important educational history was listed on the register – in fact, none was even identified.

## The future for Bendigo East

My concerns about the Heritage Council of Victoria's assessment of the Bendigo East site persist today. Firstly, this small school avenue was assessed against much larger community avenues of honour. Secondly, the avenue and school building were assessed separately, so that full heritage significance of the site, which is a rare representation of the 1916 state school Anzac Avenue planting initiative, was notably diminished.

The major consequence of failing to give the avenue trees any heritage protection was that the trees were felled. Developer KPD Group could and did legally demolish the avenue of honour trees on 9 August 2016, despite having no permit to develop the site in any way.

But will the soil in which Bendigo East avenue of honour trees were planted 100 years ago remain barren? I think not. VCAT's ruling ensures that no future development will obscure the school building's facade, hence providing space for a full replanting of the avenue.

Onward march, Anzac Avenue replanting campaign 2017!

Gemma Starr is a tree lover, law student and mother.



Andrea Gaynor

## *Roe 8: from freight link to green link*

View of the Perth bushland in 2016, before bulldozing for the now abandoned Roe highway extension.

The same bushland after its untimely clearance.

photos Andrea Gaynor

It's March 12th, the morning after the 2017 Western Australian state election. Under a heavy grey sky I am walking along a wide tract of pale yellowish sand dotted with piles of reddish-brown mulch. Here and there between the broken sticks and tyre tracks there are lively bursts of green: grass tree leaves erupting from the sand; macrozamia unfurling to an ancient rhythm; the precocious red stems of marri shoots outstretched toward their former height.

Only two months ago this was a thriving expanse of urban bushland. Southern brown bandicoots, black cockatoos and innumerable reptiles lived in and among the marri, banksia and woody pears. A community watched in horror and anguish as it was bulldozed to make way for a road that will not now be built.

### Planning a highway extension

The extension of Roe Highway, locally known as Roe 8, had been part of Perth's transport planning since 1955 but became redundant as the city evolved. After an extensive and open consultation process, a 2002 review recommended against its construction.

Roe 8 was called back into service in 2014 by Prime Minister Tony Abbott's 'Perth Freight Link': a toll road connecting the Great Northern Highway with Fremantle port. It was unclear how Roe 8 would connect to the port, but 1.2 billion dollars of federal funding were on offer so federal Department of Infrastructure and state Main Roads staff scrambled to assemble data for the provisional business case that was rushed to Infrastructure Australia.

Road developments in Perth's southern suburbs were no stranger to controversy. In 1984 people protesting the extension of Farrington Road



through the wetlands just north of the Roe 8 alignment were rammed by a bulldozer, arrested and nearly set on fire. Some of the veterans of that struggle have been trying to protect the remaining wetlands ever since. As Roe 8 proceeded, they were joined by more than 10,000 people from all walks of life.

In 1955 it was untroubling that the road would bisect the Beeliar wetlands, part of a chain of lakes along the Swan coastal plain. By the early 21st century, however, the ecological and social value of the wetlands and adjacent woodlands, and the risks associated with development, had become abundantly clear. The Western Australian Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) in 2003 said that Roe 8 would be 'extremely difficult to be made environmentally acceptable' and that 'every effort should be made to avoid' construction of the road through Beeliar Regional Park.

After Tony Abbott's 'captain's call' on the road, one by one, environmental and heritage safeguards failed. Two Aboriginal heritage sites in the path of the road were de-registered in 2014 after a cursory investigation. The Aboriginal Cultural Materials Committee rejected approval for the road in 2013, but then granted it in 2015. The EPA granted approval for the project in 2015 but this was overturned in court then reinstated on appeal, in a case that demonstrated that the EPA wasn't legally obliged to follow its own policies. A subsequent Federal Court challenge showed that the Federal Environment Minister was not legally obliged to consider evidence that Ministerial conditions were not met.

## Pre-election destruction

In early January 2017, WA Labor Party leader Mark McGowan declared that if his party won the March 2017 election, the Perth Freight Link would be scrapped. Shortly after, just two months out from the election, clearing began in earnest. Stony-faced police held back distressed men, women and children as the woody pears, marri, trees that had withstood countless harsh summers shuddered and fell before the bulldozer, then were pushed into unceremonious heaps. Grass trees withstand transplanting well and a small industry has grown up around relocating these plants to gardens from land cleared for housing. In the rush to clear as much land as possible before the election, everything was mulched. Lock-ons, tree-sits and mass actions achieved some delays, but contractors began working on weekends to make up for lost time.

After the Liberal Party's resounding electoral defeat, the community that has grown around resistance to this folly looks forward to beginning the work of replanting and restoring. A community wildlife corridor along the old Roe Highway reserve represents a new, greener vision for urban land use. The damage to Aboriginal spiritual and heritage sites may be irreparable, and the two towering Norfolk Island pines planted by Bibra Lake farmer John Dixon on his wedding day in about 1900 can never be replaced. But already the lignotubers are resprouting. The bush is tenacious and with stewardship, it can return.

**Associate Professor Andrea Gaynor** teaches Australian and environmental history at the University of Western Australia. She is currently researching environmental histories of Australia's southern mallee lands, urban agriculture and nature in urban modernity. Her books include *Harvest of the suburbs: an environmental history of growing food in Australian cities*.



Glenarm Castle

## 2017 Northern Ireland and Donegal Historic Houses and Gardens Tour

Monday 28 August to Thursday 7 September 2017

You are invited to join a small group tour (max 14) that visits many private historic houses and gardens in Northern Ireland. Baronscourt, Ballyscallion Park, Benvardeen, Greyabbey, Glenarm Castle, Rowallan and Mt Stewart are among those we visit and meet with owners and gardeners who share their knowledge and passion about their properties. We lunch with a Duke and Duchess, dine with Lords, Ladies and landed gentry, and learn gardening secrets from the true aristocracy of Horticulture - Head Gardeners of many years standing.

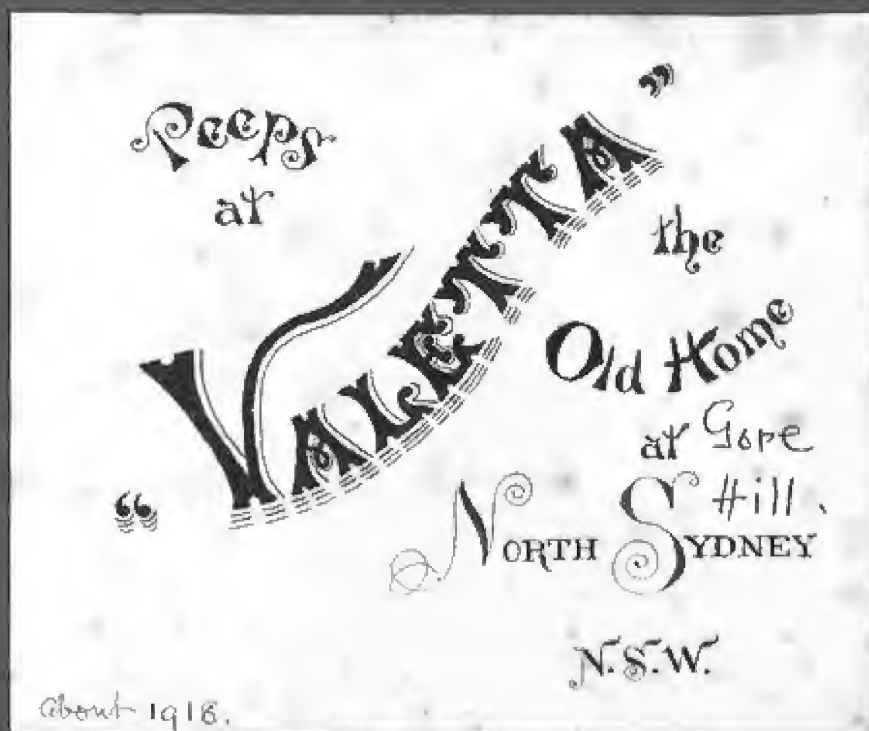
Accommodation is in characterful country house hotels with the last 2 nights spent in the grandeur of Ballywalter Park. A reasonable amount of walking is involved. Tour begins and ends in Belfast.

**Cost** **\$7,200 per person** plus Single Supplement.

Includes all meals.  
DOES NOT INCLUDE TRAVEL TO OR FROM NORTHERN IRELAND.  
Minimum of 8 bookings required for tour to run.

**Itinerary and Bookings**

Ann Wegener (Qld branch AGHS) who will accompany the tour.  
MOBILE 0407 378 585 EMAIL [annwegener@me.com](mailto:annwegener@me.com)



Margaret Chambers

## *The garden of Valetta, Sydney*

Frontispiece of early  
20th century photo  
album of Valetta.  
Private collection

The English-born gardener Edward Howlett may have laid out the splendid and sizeable garden of Valetta on Sydney's Gore Hill during his time as gardener at Valetta. The property was renovated by George Robert Whiting, and was demolished in 1939.

'Valetta' was the name chosen by George Robert Whiting when in 1880 he bought Artarmon House on Gore Hill, along with a small brickyard and a hundred acres of land of which he developed approximately seven into gardens surrounding the house. George Whiting was my maternal grandmother's maternal grandfather. His reason for choosing the name remains a family mystery.

### Edward Howlett

Recently by chance I met Jenny Pattison, an AGHS member and volunteer guide at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney. Jenny and her father Geoff Hammond are descendants of Edward Howlett who was brought out from Norfolk by George Whiting in the 1880s on a

four-year contract to work in the Valetta garden. Edward gave his occupation as 'gardener' but he was clearly more qualified than a standard gardener, as George Whiting went to the expense of bringing him out from England rather than employing local labour. Edward's descendants believe that he had had previous experience in laying out gardens in England.

It is not known to what extent George Whiting was involved in designing the landscape. My mother, who remembered Valetta from her childhood, claimed that he 'planned the extensive gardens himself as well as choosing and importing the numerous exotic trees and shrubs which he combined with suitable native species'. It seems probable that the garden was a partnership between Edward Howlett and George Whiting.

### A gracious 19th century garden

A photograph album probably compiled from about 1918 depicts a splendid and extensive garden typical of the late 19th century with tree-lined drive and massive entry gates, sweeping

lawns, a 'Tropical Portion', a tennis court, a bowling green and a pets' cemetery. The layout of the garden was naturalistic, employing exotic and native Australian plants, particularly closely planted rainforest species forming a thick canopy. Garden historian Colleen Morris considers that Valetta had characteristics common to some grand Sydney gardens in the popular 19th century gardenesque style but apparently contained more Australian rainforest trees than most.

From family sources we know that one spectacular tree, an unusual *Erythrina* (coral tree family) was moved from Valetta, probably in the 1920s, by a family friend and neighbour and, after a second move some years later, planted in the garden of Wanda Gill in Killara where it was reported in 2014 as surviving. We unsuccessfully took cuttings of this tree on two occasions.

Another plant which is part of family lore is a small red China rose known as Lady Brisbane which my mother claimed was imported by George Whiting. I understand that Lady Brisbane was its Australian name and that it was raised in France in the 1830s, recorded as the cultivar *Cramoisi superieur*. It survived for some time in family gardens and until a couple of years ago in the Gore Hill Cemetery (the cemetery became a historic site in 1974 with the *Gore Hill Cemetery Act*). I have a fine specimen which Geoff Hammond recently gave me and from which I am attempting to grow cuttings to replant in the cemetery.

Colleen Morris has identified other probable plants: several large old pines and camellias, and multiple specimens of *Cordyline australis*

and *Strelitzia nicolai*. It is impossible to identify plants with certainty from 90-year old photographs having poor resolution. However she has suggested that the following were probably included: a trimmed *Bignonia* growing over an arch, a huge *Epiphyllum*, *Bartlettina sordida* (formerly named *Eupatorium megalophyllum*), several large specimens of *Platyserium bifurcatum* (elkhorn ferns), a large *Asplenium nidus* (bird's nest fern) planted in a metal can or drum, a *Pittosporum*, a *Macadamia*, several *Syagrus romanzoffiana* (queen or cocos palms), *Phoenix rupicola* (cliff date palm), *Waterhousia floribunda* (weeping lilly pilly), *Polyscias murrayi* (pencil cedar or umbrella tree) and *Ravenala madagascariensis* (traveller's palm). These are all plants popular at the time and likely to have been among those planted.

## George Whiting

The Whitings were involved in the administration of Gore Hill Cemetery. George was a trustee and his youngest daughter Evelyn assisted in record keeping with her beautiful copperplate handwriting. It seems that in addition to the inclusion of the Lady Brisbane rose, there was another link between garden plantings and those of the cemetery. The palm trees appear from photographs to continue from the Valetta garden into the cemetery.

GR Whiting was a philanthropist whose generosity spread over many fields. Among other donations, in 1880 he provided funds for the construction of Barrenjoey lighthouse; he financed



Season's ticket for Sydney's 1879 International Exhibition, belonging to 19 year old 'Evie' (Eveline Mary) Whiting, daughter of Valetta's owner George Whiting.

Photo Lily Carrington 1879, State Library of NSW, Mitchell Library As 51

The coach house at Valetta. Its heritage-listed stables are now within the grounds of the North Sydney TAFE.  
Private collection



a development of low-cost 'workmen's cottages' in Redfern; he was a foundation supporter of St Stephen's Anglican Church, Willoughby; and he was an initial major benefactor to St Joseph's College, Hunters Hill, where the Whiting Fellowship is today named after him. In addition, although not a Catholic, he enabled the Sisters of Mercy to buy land from a vendor unwilling to sell to women/Catholics, to establish Monte Sant' Angelo Mercy College in North Sydney. He is regarded as one of their heroes, commemorated along with his wife Louisa Maria in three large stained glass windows in the chapel, one of which does not bear his name, at his request, but a depiction of a whiting fish.

Unfortunately George Whiting later had financial problems and mortgaged Valetta to the North Sydney Brick and Tile Company with the proviso that he and his two unmarried daughters Lucilla and Evelyn could remain in the house for his lifetime. The third daughter, Blanche (my great-grandmother), married to New Zealander James Hobson who founded the *North Shore and Manly Times*, lived nearby at 'Ravenswood', Greenwich.

George Whiting died in 1922; the house was demolished in 1939 with only the original stables/coachhouse remaining and now heritage listed. The property is today owned by the Northern Sydney Institute (St Leonards Campus) which holds a fine collection of documents relating to the history of the site.

Photograph of Evie Whiting with her father George, in the 'Tropical Portion' of Valetta, from an album probably compiled in the early 1920s.  
Private collection



### Acknowledgement

My thanks to Colleen Morris for her assistance in interpreting the photographs and locating the Valetta garden in the context of Australian garden development.

**Margaret Chambers** is a historian and archivist with a professional and personal interest in historical records. As a child she enjoyed her grandmother's reminiscences of Valetta. A photograph album of the garden and the chance meeting with Jenny Pattison inspired her to write this article.





Alistair Watt

## Modern-day plant hunting

From 1985 to 2000 I made a number of plant-collecting trips to Chile, Fiji, New Caledonia and New Zealand. A long-term botanical friend has urged me to record the plant introductions which resulted from these trips. This article lists my principal introductions into Australia and (in a few cases, as noted) a number of species received from other collectors.

### How did it all start?

The great plant hunter Robert Fortune was principally sponsored in his travels in the mid-1850s by the Horticultural Society of London (later the Royal Horticultural Society) and also by the mighty East India Company. Those who received his plant novelties were the rich and famous of British society who desired them for

their new gardens. Some 150 years later, the situation was different, in Australia in particular. Very few new plants were being introduced, even into our botanic gardens. As an enthusiastic collector of conifers, I had only one possible avenue for obtaining new species and that was to go and get them!

I was lucky. By building a good case, I was able to obtain support from the IUCN specialist conifer group, help from the CSIRO Forestry research section, assistance (with quarantine) and direct sponsorship from various universities and botanic gardens. The Maud Gibson Trust in Melbourne and private individuals such as the late John Silba from New York, provided a degree of funding for some expeditions.

I have recently been encouraged to document my introductions whilst I still had access to my field notes and accession records, but also, I suspect,

Plant hunting in the beautiful Namosi Valley in Fiji. The very rare *Acropyle sahniana* is now only known from a single location high on the mountain in the centre of the photograph (Mt Vakorogasiu).

photo Alistair Watt



Top: *Metrosideros collina*, introduced from Fiji in 1988.

Middle: *Astelia chathamica*, introduced from New Zealand in 1991.

Bottom: The conifer *Acropyle pancheri*, introduced from New Caledonia in 1987. Its silver-wax stomatal bands are particularly striking.  
photos Alistair Watt

while I was still 'compos mentis'! Not only will the publication of the plant lists below allow those growing the material to have some idea of provenance, but it will also establish the date of introduction of a number of new species into Australia (and some introductions sent elsewhere, eg the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh).

The listing below refers essentially to my own plant collecting activities in Fiji, New Caledonia and New Zealand (etc), but additionally includes some of the material collected in Chile in 1985 while on expedition with Dr Ben Wallace.

The last two decades of the 20th century were perhaps a golden age for plant introductions. Not only were plant handling facilities well developed, but ethylene-absorbent plastic bags were available, many quarantine establishments were in existence, and air carriage was quick and efficient. In those days it was relatively straightforward for plant hunters to obtain an import permit for live plant propagation material, and it was also quite legal to import a wide range of species as seeds. The recent, and extremely clumsy, Nagoya Protocol to the Convention on Biological Diversity is aimed at 'controlling' the movement of plants between countries, and will probably now make new plant introductions in this way all but impossible.

## Places to see living plants

At present the Geelong Botanical Gardens holds a good range of the original introductions which I was responsible for bringing in and a large number of newly propagated species will shortly be planted in a dedicated 'Southern Hemisphere' section including, for example, the beautiful *Dacrydium nausoriense* collected in the mountains behind Nandi in Fiji. In addition, in a dedicated New Caledonian section adjacent to their New Zealand bed, the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne displays an interesting range of species mainly collected by the author. The botanic gardens of Sydney, Adelaide and Hobart also hold some collections propagated from my original plant introductions. Although I am growing most of the new conifer species here in our arboretum at Lavers Hill, the cool climate of southern Victoria has proved to be too cold for most of the tropical low-altitude plants such as *Storckia* and the *Xanthostemon* species, for example. Certain species — *Caldcluvia rosifolia*, *Metrosideros collina*, *Xeronema moorei* and *Carpolepis laurifolia* among them — are now being offered by some 'rare plant' nurseries.

## Expedition and plant details

When collecting plant material in the wild, either for propagation or herbarium purposes, it is most necessary to provide details of the provenance of the collection locality of any specimen taken, such as the latitude/longitude, altitude and environment. As an initial step, the collector assigns his or her own unique 'collection number' to each and every specimen. Generally this number includes an indication of the year of collection. It is the collector's numbers which tie the individual specimen to the collection records maintained for the particular plant

specimen. All the material listed herein was collected with the required permissions from the authorities of the countries or native landowners involved (for example, in Fiji) and legally processed by the Australian quarantine service. Virtually all the material imported was initially handled by one or another of our major botanic gardens (identifications, quarantine etc). The species marked with an asterisk (\*) are those which I know came into limited cultivation here in Australia, but I presently can find no evidence of whether they still survive. The author would welcome any feedback from those who may have these growing in their gardens.

## 1985 Chile

This list details the significant species collected during an extended plant collecting expedition to Chile by Dr Ben Wallace and John Forlonge, both of the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney, and the author. These have BJW 850001 to 850354 collection numbers. Species which are listed on CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) were formally cleared through Sydney's Royal Botanic Garden and the relevant Chilean authorities.

*Acacia caven*  
*Aextoxicon punctatum*  
*Araucaria araucana*  
*Austrocedrus chilensis*  
*Caldcluvia paniculata*  
*Citronella mucronata*  
*Cryptocarya alba*  
*Drimys andina*  
*Empetrum rubrum*  
*Escallonia alpina*  
*Escallonia pulverulenta*  
*Escallonia revoluta*  
*Fascicularia bicolor*  
*Fitzroya cupressoides*  
*Gaultheria insana* (as *G. furiens*)  
*Gaultheria leucocarpa*  
*Gaultheria littoralis*  
*Gevuina avellana*  
*Gomortega keule*\*  
*Greigia sphacelata*  
*Griselinia jodiniifolia*  
*Griselinia scandens*  
*Gunnera magellanica*  
*Latua pubiflora*  
*Laurelia serrata*  
*Laureliopsis philippiana*  
*Lepidodermis fonkii*\*  
*Libertia sessiliflora*  
*Lithraea caustica*

*Lobelia tupa*  
*Lomatia dentata*  
*Lomatia ferruginea*  
*Lomatia hirsuta*  
*Maytenus magellanica*  
*Nothofagus alessandri*  
*Nothofagus betuloides*  
*Nothofagus glauca*  
*Nothofagus leonii*  
*Nothofagus pumilo*  
*Ovidia andina*\*  
*Persea lingue*  
*Peumus boldus*  
*Pilgerodendron uviferum*  
*Proustia pyrifolia*  
*Pseudopanax laetevirens*  
*Puya berteroniana*  
*Puya chilensis*  
*Quillaja saponaria*  
*Ribes magellanica*  
*Tepualia stipularis*  
*Viola rubella*

## 1986

Material obtained from Dr Nancy Bowers under import permit directly from Mt Hagen, Papua New Guinea

*Papuacedrus papuana*  
*Phyllocladus hypophyllum*  
*Podocarpus rubens*  
*Dacrydium beccarii*

## 1986 Fiji

Alistair and Julie Watt (AW 860001-0198 collection numbers)

*Acacia richii*\*  
*Agapetes* (as *Paphia*) *vitiensis*\*  
*Agathis macrophylla*\*  
*Bulbophyllum vitiense*\*  
*Cordia subcordata*\*  
*Cycas seemannii*  
*Dacrydium imbricatum* var. *patulus*  
*Dendrobium mohlianum*\*  
*Dendrobium prasinum*\*

*Gardenia hutchinsoniana*  
*Pittosporum rhytidocarpum*  
*Podocarpus neriifolius*

## 1987 New Caledonia

Alistair Watt et al. (AW 870500 to 870581 collection numbers)

*Acropyle pancheri*  
*Agathis lanceolata*  
*Agathis montana*  
*Agathis ovata*  
*Araucaria bernieri*  
*Araucaria biramulata*  
*Araucaria laubenfelsii*  
*Araucaria luxurians*  
*Araucaria muelleri*  
*Araucaria nemorosa*  
*Araucaria scopulorum*  
*Araucaria subulata*  
*Codiaeum peltatum*  
*Dacrydium araucarioides*  
*Dacrydium guillauminii*  
*Dubouzetia confusa*  
*Libocedrus yateensis*  
*Myodocarpus fraxinifolius*  
*Neocallitropsis pancheri*  
*Neoveitchia storckii*\*  
*Nepenthes vieillardii*  
*Nothofagus aequilateralis*\*  
*Podocarpus decumbens*\*  
*Podocarpus longefoliolatus*  
*Podocarpus sylvestris*  
*Podocarpus gnidioides*  
*Retrophyllum minor*  
*Xeronema moorei*

## 1988

This material was sent under import permit directly from Pinetum Blijdenstein, and quarantined by the Adelaide Botanic Garden.

*Pseudotaxus chienii*  
*Amentotaxus formosana*

## 1988 Fiji

Alistair Watt and Bob Cherry (AW collection numbers 880100 to 880160)

*Acropyle sahniana*  
*Balaka longirostris*\*  
*Balaka macrocarpa*\*  
*Collospermum montanum*  
*Cyathea alta*\*  
*Cyathea lunulata*\*  
*Dacrydium nausoriensis*  
*Dacrydium nidulum*  
*Davallia fejeensis*\*  
*Dendrobium platygastrium*\*  
*Homalium nitens*\*

*Huperzia squarrosa*\*  
*Metrosideros collina*  
*Podocarpus affinis*  
*Podocarpus degeneri*  
*Podocarpus hybrid*  
*Retrophyllum vitiense*  
*Saurauia rubicunda*  
*Scaevola taccada*\*  
*Spathoglottis pacifica*\*  
*Turillia ferruginea*\*

## 1991 New Zealand

(Alistair and Julie Watt (collection numbers AW 910001 to 910047))

*Astelia chathamica*  
*Caldcluvia rosifolia*  
*Cordyline indivisa*  
*Cordyline kaspar*\*  
*Cordyline pumilio*  
*Dianella nigra*  
*Elaeocarpus dentatus*  
*Elingamita johnsonii*  
*Fuchsia excorticata*  
*Gaultheria antipoda*  
*Geranium traversii*  
*Griselinia lucida*  
*Halocarpus biformis*  
*Halocarpus kirkii*  
*Knightia excelsa*  
*Laurelia novae-zelandiae*  
*Lepidodermis intermedius*  
*Leptospermum scoparium*  
*Libertia pulchella*  
*Libocedrus bidwillii*  
*Libocedrus plumosa*  
*Lilium mackliniae*  
*Macropiper excelsum*  
*Manoao colensoi*  
*Nothofagus solandri*  
*Olearia ilicifolia*\*  
*Ourisia macrophylla*\*  
*Peperomia urvilleana*  
*Planchonella costata*  
*Pomaderris kumeraho*  
*Rhopalostylis cheesemani*\*  
*Schefflera digitata*  
*Taxus brevifolia*  
*Weinmannia silvicola*  
*Xeronema callistemon*

## 1993 New Caledonia

Alistair and Julie Watt (collection numbers AW 930100 to 930150)

*Alphitonia neocaledonica*\*  
*Araucaria humboldtensis*  
*Astelia neocaledonica*  
*Cordyline neocaledonica*

*Cunonia bullata*\*  
*Cunonia macrophylla*\*  
*Dacrycarpus veillardii*\*  
*Dacrydium balansae*  
*Dacrydium lycopodioides*\*  
*Dianella ensifolia*\*  
*Dicksonia thyrsopteroides*\*  
*Dodonaea viscosa*\*  
*Dracophyllum* sp.\*  
*Falcatifolium taxoides*  
*Gymnostoma deplancheanum*  
*Joinvillea gaudichaudiana*\*  
*Libocedrus chevalieri*  
*Melaleuca quinquenervia*  
*Metrosideros operculata*  
*Podocarpus lucienii*  
*Podocarpus sylvestris*  
*Schefflera candelabrum*  
*Xanthostemon aurantiacus*

### 1993 New Zealand

Alistair and Julie Watt  
(collection numbers  
AW 930100 to 930092)  
*Aristolelia serrata*  
*Ascarina lucida*\*  
*Astelia solandri*  
*Beilschmiedia tarairi*  
*Beilschmiedia tawa*  
*Collospermum hastatum*  
*Coriaria pteridoides*  
*Corynocarpus laevigatus*  
*Dracophyllum latifolium*  
*Dysoxylum spectabile*\*  
*Fuchsia procumbens*  
*Gunnera prorepens*  
*Hibiscus trionum*  
*Laurelia novae-zelandiae*  
*Melicope ternata*  
*Pennantia baylisiana*\*  
*Phyllocladus alpinus*  
*Podocarpus hallii*  
*Pomaderris elliptica*  
Kingdon-Ward wild-collected  
rhododendrons ex. Pukeiti:  
*Rhododendron protistum* 'Pukeiti'  
KW 21498  
*Rhododendron ciliicalyx*  
KW20280  
*Rhododendron crassum* KW  
20939  
*Rhododendron johnstoneanum*  
KW 20305

### 1994 New Caledonia

Alistair and Julie Watt  
(collection numbers  
AW 941501 to 941705).  
*Arillastrum gummiferum*\*  
*Astelia neocaledonica*

*Austrotaxus spicata*\*  
*Callistemon pancheri*  
*Callistemon suberosa*\*  
*Carpolepis laurifolia*  
*Casuarina collina*  
*Cunonia hirsuta*\*  
*Cycas circinalis*  
*Dacrydium x suprinii*\*  
*Dicksonia baudouinii*  
*Diospyros pentamera*\*  
*Dysoxylum rufescens*\*  
*Geissois hirsuta*  
*Joinvillea plicata*\*  
*Libocedrus austrocaledonica*  
*Metrosideros porphyrea*  
*Podocarpus novae-caledoniae*  
*Prumnopitys ferruginoides*  
*Retrophyllum comptonii*  
*Santalum neocaledonicum*  
*Tristanopsis glauca*

### 1995 New Caledonia

Alistair and Julie Watt  
(collection numbers  
AW 950003 to 950204)  
*Carpolepis laurifolia* dwarf form,  
summit Mt. Humboldt  
*Dracophyllum humboldtensis*\*  
*Gardenia aubryi*\*  
*Grevillea exul*  
*Grevillea gillivrayi*  
*Metrosideros tetrasticha*  
*Nothofagus codonandra*  
*Podocarpus* *afin. sylvestris*  
(now *P. colliculatus*)  
*Stenocarpus milnei*  
*Stenocarpus umbelliferus*  
*Syzygium tripetalum*  
*Xanthostemon longipes*\*

### 1996 New Caledonia

Alistair and Julie Watt  
(collection numbers  
AW 960001 to 960064)  
*Storckia pancheri*  
*Xanthostemon macrophyllus*\*  
*Xanthostemon laurinus*\*

### 2000 Rarotonga

Alistair and Julie Watt  
(collection numbers AW 20001  
to 200018). Seed only sent to  
the Brisbane Botanic Gardens.  
*Alphitonia zizyphoides*\*  
*Fitchia speciosa*\*  
*Fagraea berteriana*\*  
*Sophora tomentosa*\*



*Araucaria biramulata* growing high in the central chain of mountains, New Caledonia. photo Alistair Watt

## So, what was the point of it all?

It should be stressed that my ventures were never intended to be for profit. Nearly all plant material collected was processed and assessed for weed-potential through our botanic gardens. As a result of our plant collecting expeditions, for example, the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney got many new species for its 'Araucaria lawn', Melbourne was able to create its New Caledonian bed, and I in return eventually obtained those rare conifer species that had never been cultivated anywhere.

It is quite likely that only a few of the plants introduced between 1985 and 2000 will ever have any significant commercial value but as known-provenance collections, the plants have definite value for ex situ conservation (conservation outside the original habitat). These novelties have changed my own garden and also those of several botanical institutions. And, despite the views of those who argue for the status quo — an all-'Australian natives' garden, for example — how dull would our gardens actually be if the plants in them had never changed over the centuries!

### Acknowledgement

Finally, as for many authors, the greatest thank you of all must go to my partner in all this — my wife Julie. For 30 years she has put up with being dragged away on plant collecting expeditions to some really out of the comfort zone locations involving not only climbing mountains in the rain but also bearing up to the inevitable cleaning of seeds. To Julie, then, my gratitude for all the help you gave, and the patience you maintained.

**Alistair Watt** has been a semi-professional plant hunter for over 20 years, with travels ranging from Chile to New Caledonia and Fiji. He was an honorary research assistant of the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne for some years and has led several plant-hunting expeditions which brought many new species into cultivation.





Glenn Cooke

## *‘Where have all the flower carpets gone?’*

Floral carpets are among the most spectacular of any floral displays presented in celebratory events. Small-scale circular floral carpets have been a feature of the harvest festival of Kerala in southern India for centuries. In Spello, Italy, the feast of Corpus Domini – celebrated by carpeting the main streets of the city with flower petals – inspired famous religious paintings as does, to a lesser degree, the township of Foz in Spain’s Northwest. Australia’s floral carpet history reveals an important connection with Queensland artist and art teacher Betty Quelhurst.

The most spectacular modern floral carpet is the 77 x 24 m carpet of 600,000 flowering tuberous begonias installed in the forecourt of Grand-Place in Brussels. The first of these floral carpets was created in 1971 by landscape architect

E Stautmans to promote begonias (Belgium is the world’s largest producer of begonias). The 20th floral carpet was installed in 2016.

Throughout Australia during the post World War II period, flower shows still were a part of every community and parish as a key element in fund-raising events for the year. Organisations in the cities drew on their greater resources to establish flower shows on much larger scale. In Brisbane the Creche and Kindergarten Association of Queensland established a Floral Festival in 1933 which (following the inspiration from England) became known as the Chelsea Flower Show, and was an important source of funds for more than two decades.

### C&K Floral Festivals

In Australia, Ballarat’s Begonia Festival on occasion also presents more modestly scaled carpets but it was in Brisbane that one young artist, Betty Quelhurst (1919–2008), helped

Aerial view of the floral carpet next to the War Memorial on North Terrace, Adelaide, on 25 October 1936 (during the centenary celebrations of European settlement). People are also viewing floral decorations around the base of the War Memorial, across from the Institute building.

State Library of South Australia PRG 287/1/4/5



Betty Quelhurst (centre) in 1951 with two art students from Brisbane's Central Technical College, installing a floral carpet. The woman behind Betty, looking to the right, is her sister Rene.  
Family collection

establish floral carpets as a feature of the Creche and Kindergarten's annual Floral Festival in the 1940s and in so doing, established her own profile.

The initial impetus for this attraction was the efforts of Mrs Alvin M Colvin, who came to Queensland in 1936 when her husband was appointed manager of the Hume Pipe Company's Brisbane branch in 1936.<sup>1</sup> She had been involved with Mrs B Mehrtens in the early stages of producing Adelaide's Centennial Floral Carpet, and returned to Adelaide in September of that year to see its completion on the lawn in front of the War Memorial in North Terrace.<sup>2</sup> The carpet, which was designed by Miss Gwyneth Norton and celebrated Australia's links with the United Kingdom, was suggested by Mrs Colvin as a suitable attraction for the Creche and Kindergarten Association's 1937 Floral Festival. She arranged for the hessian base to be sent from Adelaide. It was used to make a floral carpet installed in the main auditorium of the Brisbane City Hall, a more benign venue than the exposed

setting at Adelaide. Its dimensions, 44 x 30 ft (13.4 x 9.1 metres), became the standard size for the carpets.

The appeal of the Adelaide carpet was attributed to its colouring. Mrs Colvin investigated what flowers would be available in Brisbane for the September carpet and reported that 'pink roses, blue pansies, guinea gold marigolds, and wisteria will be plentiful, but that the cream ground work may not be possible in the roses which were used in the Adelaide carpet'. 'She suggests that cream stocks and the rich clusters of cream frangipani will make an excellent substitute', reported the *Adelaide Advertiser* (27 July 1937 p 6). The floral carpet was as successful in Brisbane as it had been in Adelaide. The following year Mrs Colvin spent over two and a half weeks in Sydney supervising and assisting with the remaking of the carpet for the Creche and Kindergarten Association there.<sup>3</sup>

Thus inspired, in 1939 the Brisbane branch of the association sponsored a national competition for a new carpet design for an Empire floral carpet. Twenty-one Queenslanders and artists from every other Australian State (including eight from Adelaide) competed for the 10 guinea prize, which was awarded to 19 year old Betty Quelhurst, an art student at Brisbane's Central Technical College.

Her design incorporated floral emblems of the British Isles and the Commonwealth of Nations: the rose, shamrock, thistle, leek, wattle, fern-leaf, maple, protea and lotus. Mrs Colvin again coordinated the production of the carpet, which followed the same procedure in subsequent years: children attending state schools around the city brought home-grown flowers to their school; they were collected and ferried by members of the Rotary Club to the Brisbane City Hall where they were beheaded by a host of volunteers and then installed with the assistance of female art students from the Central Technical College. Allowing for some exaggeration, a million or more flowers were used each year.

In this way the Association began a cooperative venture with the artist which lasted until 1954. Even during World War II, when Quelhurst served in the RAAF for four years, and when she studied under William Dargie at the National Gallery School in Melbourne under the terms of the Rehabilitation Training Scheme from 1948 to 1950, she was flown to Brisbane to design and supervise the installation of the carpets. Although there is scant record of floral carpets in newspaper reports in the years of World War II, Quelhurst's own records list her designs:

1939	British Empire – England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales
1940	Britannia
1941	Lion, Unicorn, Emu, Kangaroo
1942	Persian design
1943	Red Cross design
1944	Flags of the Allies
1945	Victory design
1946	Mary, Mary, quite contrary
1947	Poinsettia design
1948	Noah's ark
1949	Butterfly motif
1950	St George and the dragon <sup>4</sup>
1951	Coronet design

We have no extant description of the 1952 carpet (designed by Daphne Grigson) or that for 1953, but Betty was involved in neither as she was studying in Europe. However, her design of a fountain was one of the two smaller carpets for the 1954 Floral Festival (Madge Staunton of the Royal Queensland Art Society designed the other).

Mrs Colvin selected the colours for the first of Betty's design but her approved colours came unstuck when on the morning of 5 October 1939 an urgent call went out for 'many more arum lilies and a number of pale pink roses' as the display was to be opened by the Governor, Sir Leslie Wilson that afternoon.<sup>5</sup>

The design for the 1940 carpet was suggested by Mrs Colvin and drawn up by Betty. It depicted:

*Britannia with trident complete riding on the waves which are fashioned of the nasturtium leaves. Lilies figure prominently in the design, but the figure, out of compliment to the English rose, will be fashioned solely of roses. A touch of Queensland will be introduced by silky oak plumes which are being utilised for the bronze of Britannia's helmet and trident and which it is hoped will blend with the copper bordering of pennies which onlookers are expected to contribute.'*<sup>6</sup>

This was a time when a penny had actual value: the border was one foot wide, covered an area of 156 square feet and raised approximately £80.

No photograph of the carpet for the Floral Festival in October 1941 survives but the brief

description in the *Telegraph* confirms the then close connections between Australia and the British Isles – the map at the centre had lines radiating from Brisbane to where Australian troops were stationed in different parts of the globe. (US forces stationed in Queensland during the war years made an enormous economic and social impact in Brisbane but the arrival of the first contingent was yet two months away.) The Union Jack at one end was flanked by the Lion and Unicorn and the Australian standard at the other was flanked by the Kangaroo and Emu and was 'mounted on an ocean of green nasturtium leaves'.<sup>7</sup>

Every year the call was put out for the flowers blooming in the northern spring, especially orange, yellow and guinea gold calendulas, roses of every kind (but particularly deep red), white lilies, stock of any colour, delphiniums, purple, red and pink bougainvillea and nasturtium leaves. The silvery green leaves of the nasturtium, which proved essential for many of the design backgrounds, grew rampantly in vacant lots around Brisbane and provided a counterfoil for the rather strident colour combinations suggested here. Even the gardens at Government House were plundered, as the wives of the various Governors were Patronesses of the Association.

The impact of the war was also to be seen in the subsequent dearth of descriptions in newspapers until 1946 when a nursery rhyme theme, 'Mary, Mary, quite contrary', was chosen for that year's carpet. In 1947 the poinsettia, Brisbane's official flower, dominated the design as it was featured in the central scroll and also at the four corners. Betty Quelhurst scaled up her design onto hessian matting in one of the buildings at the grounds of the Royal National Association (the 'Ekka') — this exercise took several days — before transferring it to the City Hall.

Up to 50 women worked to execute these carpets. Many newspapers reported that some volunteers worked in shifts up to midnight the night before

Left: Betty Quelhurst's Britannia floral carpet for the 1940 Floral Festival of the C&K Association.

*Courier-Mail* [Brisbane] 3 October 1939 p 6

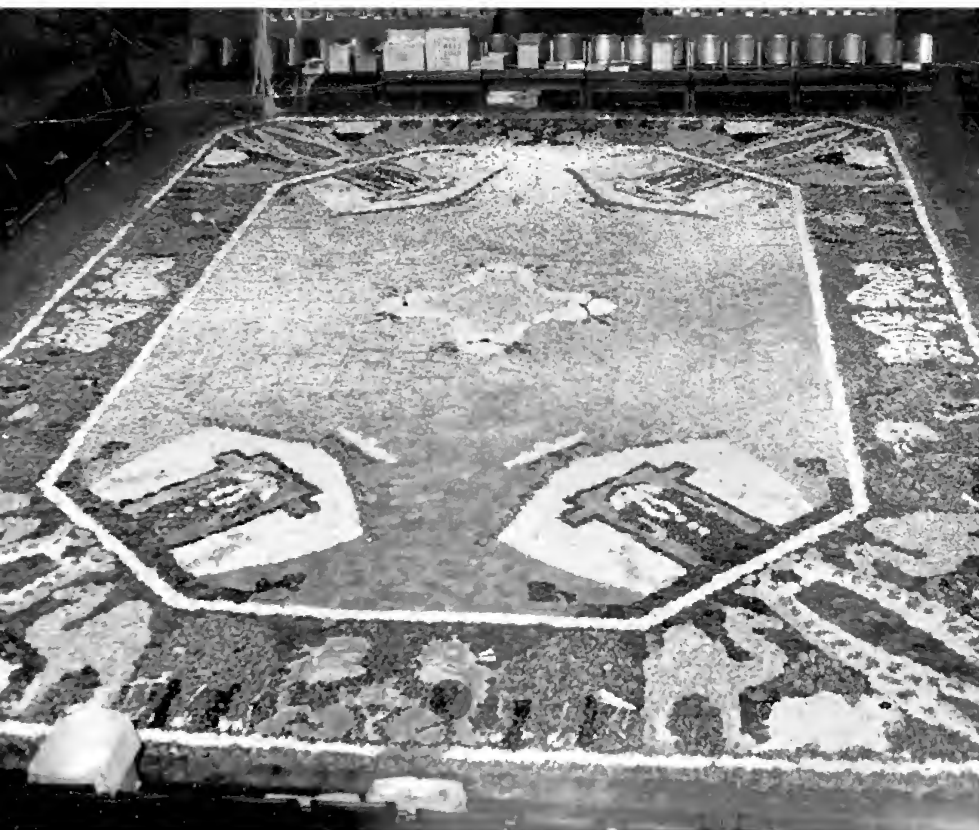
Middle: Portrait of Betty Quelhurst holding her poinsettia design for the 1947 floral carpet.

*Telegraph* [Brisbane] 20 September 1947

Right: Miss R Blocksidge and Mrs Roy Hancock (in front), Mrs Felix Arden and L Brain (at the back) preparing blossoms for the floral carpet.

*Telegraph* Brisbane, 16 October 1940 p 9





Top: Floral carpet illustrating 'Noah's Ark', on display in 1948 at the Chelsea Flower Show, Town Hall Brisbane.  
 Courtesy State Library of Queensland



Right: Former art students assist Miss Betty Quelhurst, the designer of the floral carpet, by receiving the blooms brought to the City Hall today.  
 From left to right are Misses Marilyn Bopp (Bardon), Betty Schaefer (Annerley), and Margaret Cornish (Mitchelton).  
 Telegraph [Brisbane] 31 August 1949 p 1

the opening of each Floral Festival. Having the artist to hand was also an advantage. Before the opening Quelhurst had to make alterations to the colour scheme when insufficient dark purple flowers had been received.<sup>8</sup>

Quelhurst's dedication to her art studies and the prizes she was awarded, her teaching experience at the Moreton Bay College, Somerville House and the Ipswich Girls Grammar was enhanced by her efforts with Flower Festival. In 1955 she took up an appointment in the Art Branch at the Central Technical College, Brisbane, and became a full time teacher there in 1966. The Art Branch became the (Queensland) College of Art and Quelhurst, an artist of substance herself, retired in 1984.

The themes of several of Quelhurst's carpets reflected Australia's ties to the British Isles, which shifted noticeably in the 1950s and 1960s when Australia began to establish trading links with the USA and Asia. World War II also saw a major entry of women into the workforce. With social and changing financial circumstances, women comprise 46.2% of employees in Australia's workforce,<sup>9</sup> and there is reduced opportunity for women volunteering their services for such community projects. Flowers shows such as that documented have now passed into history. Their place has been taken by large commercial ventures such as Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show and Toowoomba's Carnival of Flowers.

## Notes

- 1 Advertiser [Adel], 17 Jan 1936 p 24.
- 2 Advertiser, 23 Sept 1937 p 7.
- 3 Courier-Mail [Brisb], 19 Oct 1938 p 1.
- 4 Mrs Colvin was residing in Melbourne and took advantage of Betty's proximity to have her design a carpet for the Free Kindergarten Union which was displayed at Wirth's Olympia 16-18 March 1950 Age [Melb], 17 Mar 1950.
- 5 Courier-Mail, 5 Oct 1939 p 6.
- 6 Telegraph [Brisb], 16 Oct 1940 p 9.
- 7 Telegraph, 2 Oct 1941 p 4.
- 8 Courier-Mail, 1 Sept 1949 p 5.
- 9 [www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/Stats\\_at\\_a\\_Glance.pdf](http://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/Stats_at_a_Glance.pdf) Aug 2016.

**Glenn R Cooke** graduated with a BA from Melbourne and MA from George Washington University in Washington DC, before being appointed as the first curator of decorative arts at the Queensland Art Gallery in 1981. He retired as research curator, Queensland Heritage, in 2013. He has published extensively on aspects of the fine and decorative arts and has been actively involved in AGHS since 1995. Glenn is an enthusiastic collector, gardener and ballroom dancer.





Sandra Pullman

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## *Charles Joseph La Trobe's garden* PART 2



Surprisingly, the plants available to Charles La Trobe for his Melbourne garden included quite a few native species. Although it is sometimes popularly believed that Australians of the time did not like natives, this is not so, as the work of the Friends of La Trobe's Cottage shows. Plants such as mintbush (*Prostanthera lasianthos*), white correa (*Correa alba*) and Gynea lily (*Doryanthes excelsa*) were available.

## Plant sleuths

Sourcing heritage plants can be difficult because today most modern nurseries only stock popular hybrids or cultivars, rarely the good old species plants. It took a while but finally a list of growers was established who supplied unusual plants. These growers include the Growing Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne, the Propagation Group of the Friends of Burnley Gardens, the Salvia Society Victoria, the Pelargonium Society based at the Geelong Botanic Gardens and Andrew Thompson from Cactusland.

While some of the plants in La Trobe Bateman's sketches, such as the flax (*Phormium tenax*), were really easy to identify, others were really hard. It is quite possible that the identity of some, such as creepers growing on the trellis and on the roof of the cottage, may never be known.

The next problem arose when choosing plants like the roses and the apple trees. Where there are thousands to choose from, which ones did La Trobe grow? He gives no clues, except to say in the case of the roses, that they were red and yellow. In these circumstances the Friends did their best to stay within the time period and were guided by what growers can supply today.

## Plants named after La Trobe

To their delight, the Friends discovered that La Trobe had quite a few plants named after him, including his own genus. We decided to have as many as these plants as possible in the garden. You can find *Acacia acinacea* (syn. *Acacia latrobei*) gold-dust wattle, *Correa lawrenceana* var. *latrobeana* mountain correa, *Glycine latrobeana* purple clover, *Grevillea rosmarinifolia* subsp. *rosmarinifolia* (syn. *G. latrobei*) rosemary grevillea, *Eremophila latrobei* crimson turkey bush, and *Pandorea pandorana* (syn. *T. latrobei* (Mueller)) wonga vine. We have been unable to source plants of the Western Australian genus *Latrobea*.

La Trobe was a keen botanist. He made 94 journeys into the wilds of undiscovered Victoria, often visiting places that few if any European

settlers had visited (Reilly Drury 2006). On these amazing trips he would collect plants. La Trobe sent his specimens to the Swiss botanist Carl Meisner (1800–74), a prominent European professor of botany for 40 years at Basel University, whose speciality was Australian plants, in particular the families of Proteaceae, Fabaceae, Mimosaceae and Myrtaceae. Why La Trobe sent them to Meisner and not to the famous English botanists of the time Joseph Dalton Hooker (1817–1911) or George Bentham (1800–84) is not known. It was Meisner who named a new genus *Latrobea* in the Fabaceae family after La Trobe.

## La Trobe's collecting

Another exciting discovery was that the National Herbarium of Victoria contains a specimen of digger's speedwell (*Derwentia perfoliata*) collected by La Trobe in 1850 in the upper reaches of the Loddon River while he was exploring the Great Dividing Range. So of course one of these had to be planted in the garden.

In 1853 La Trobe employed Dr Ferdinand von Mueller as Victoria's first professional botanist. In gratitude for La Trobe's patronage, Mueller named the wonga wonga vine *Tecoma latrobei* after La Trobe. This plant has had several name changes, and the synonyms tell the story of its naming. It is now known as *Pandorea pandorana* (Steenis 1928) syn. *Bignonia pandorana* (Andrews 1800), syn. *Tecoma australis* (Brown 1810), syn. *Tecoma latrobei* (Mueller 1853). There is a delightful letter from von Mueller to William Hooker at Kew, lamenting that *Tecoma latrobei* was going to be changed to *T. australis* (Home 1998, 2012).

### Changes in botanical names

Many plants incur name changes. The protocol for naming algae, fungi, and plants in the International Code of Nomenclature is that the first person to describe and publish the information about the plant has the right to name it. Communication in the 19th century was very slow compared to today's speed of sharing knowledge, and it would not have been uncommon for other botanists to be unaware that a plant had already been named.

## Garden treasures

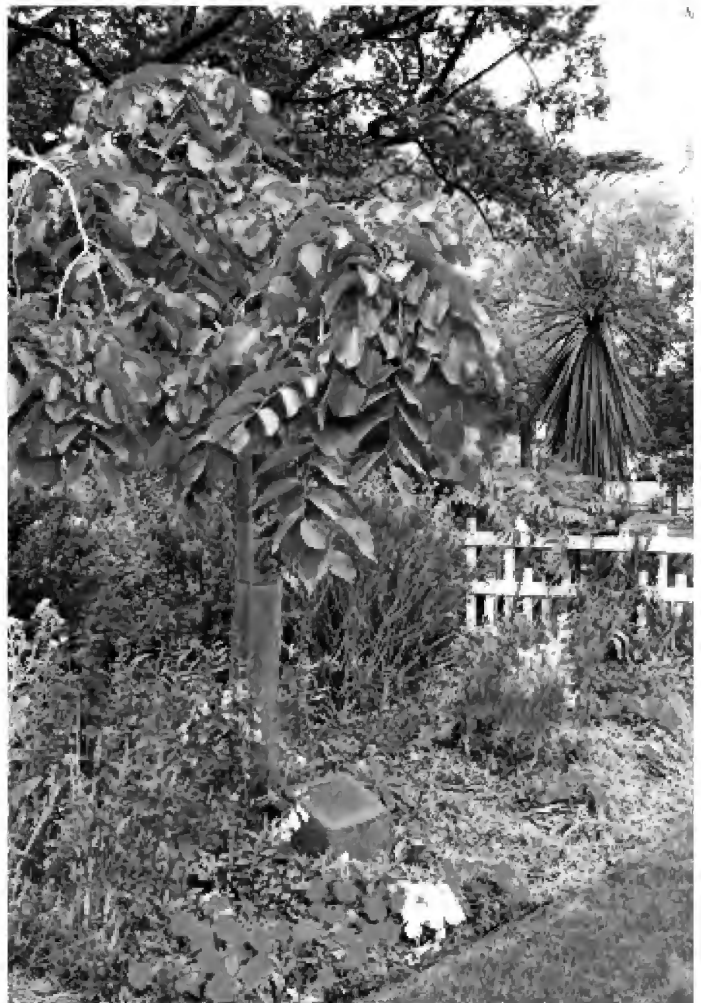
The garden at La Trobe's Cottage is full of interesting plants that have connections to La Trobe, his friends and family. There is the scented geranium that is said to have come from a cutting when the cottage was in Jolimont, and the angel's trumpet – or as the Friends call it, Mrs Perry's Creeper (*Maurandya barclayana*)

Page 21: George Alexander Gilbert  
*A View of Jolimont*,  
Melbourne, Port  
Phillip 1843–44.

State Library of Victoria

Page 21: Front view  
of Jolimont. Pencil  
and Chinese white  
drawing on brown  
paper by Edward  
La Trobe Bateman,  
ca 1852–54.

State Library of Victoria



— growing over the trellis on the front steps. The Bishop and Mrs Frances Perry lived at Upper Jolimont while their home Bishops court was being built in East Melbourne. Mrs Perry noted in her journal that she had seen it growing in La Trobe's garden (A de Q Robin 1983).

Another two plants of interest which have connections with La Trobe are the banksia rose (*Rosa banksiae*) and the weeping elm (*Ulmus glabra* 'Camperdownii'). The banksia rose was planted on the corner of the verandah in 2006 when Dr Charles La Trobe Blake, great-great-grandson of La Trobe, was visiting Melbourne for the unveiling of the bronze statue of La Trobe outside the State Library of Victoria.

Dr John Henry de La Trobe planted the original weeping elm in 1989 on the site that is now the children's garden at the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne. His great-great-grandfather John Frederic de La Trobe was the younger brother of Christian Ignatius La Trobe, who was Charles La Trobe's father. When the cottage moved across the road to the Kings Domain either the elm was moved or another specimen was planted, but it died due to the 14 years of drought that Melbourne experienced from 1995 to 2009.

In March 2011, the Friends sourced another one (they had become hard to get) and it was donated by the Friends of the Elms. It now is thriving, after an early setback when it was nearly ringbarked by possums.

Other plants of interest are *Pelargonium acetosum* sorrel-leaved pelargonium, *P. cucullatum* tree pelargonium, *P. inquinans* (2011) scarlet geranium, *Salvia patens* gentian sage, *Camellia japonica* 'Anemoniflora', waratah camellia *C. japonica* 'Welbankii' (white flower), Iris 'Jolimont' (white) bearded iris, *Rosa* 'Duchesse d' Angouleme' (gallica rose), *Rosa* 'Chateau de Napoleon' (moss rose), *Rosa alba* 'Felicite Parmentier' (alba rose), *Rosa* 'Louise Odier' (bourbon rose), Rose du Roi a 'Fleurs Pourpres', *Malus* 'Ribston Pippin' (1709) apple, and *Malus* 'Pomme de Neige' (pre 1800s).

This is but a small selection of species. There is more information on our plants and their provenance on the Friends of La Trobe's Cottage website [www.foltc.latrobesociety.org.au/garden.html](http://www.foltc.latrobesociety.org.au/garden.html). Over the last seven years, the cottage and garden have been transformed. Visitors often give positive feedback about the garden and the volunteers are proud of a garden that reflects their hard work and dedication to creating a garden similar to the one La Trobe himself created.

Left: Part of lower rockery at Jolimont. Sketch by E La Trobe Bateman.

State Library of Victoria, La Trobe Picture Collection

Right: The weeping elm bed in summer. photo Sandra Pullman

La Trobe's Cottage  
open October–April  
2–4pm Sundays

Tours of La Trobe's  
Cottage and  
Government  
House Monday  
and Thursday  
mornings, book on  
the National Trust  
website

## Garden styles of La Trobe's time: picturesque and gardenesque

More investigation is needed before resolving the question of what style (if any) La Trobe designed his garden in. In the Conservation Analysis report prepared for the National Trust Victoria, Miles Lewis (1994) notes that La Trobe was a 'connoisseur of the picturesque and landscape painter of talent'. But this contradicts Gilbert's painting *A View of Jolimont*, which shows a gardenesque arrangement where there is enough space between each plant to show their characteristics and grow into each other. However, by the time his cousin Edward La Trobe Bateman is sketching the garden in 1853–54, it had gone romantic and wild. An interesting question arises, did La Trobe deliberately create a wild garden or did it go wild because of the lack of labour? It is a question that we may never know the answer to. But it does fit into the picturesque aesthetic, as the picturesque was a reaction to the formal manicured gardens.

The picturesque was an 18th century ideal introduced to the cultural debate by garden theorist William Gilpin (1724–1804) who liked natural gardens. He intended that the landscapes were to be appreciated in the romantic view of the painters such as Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665) or Claude Lorrain (1604–1682). The picturesque was concerned with the question of what was beauty and what was sublime? Beautiful elements could be smoothness and gentle curves, and sublime could be dramatic natural landscapes using scenes such as wild rivers or jagged craggy mountains with mists swirling round or ruins of castles. They could also include landscapes where the viewer got a shock or surprise, making the senses come alive if viewers were not expecting something so rugged, dramatic, or scary (C Anne Neale 2002). None of the landscapes were natural – they were manipulated to create the effect a gardener wanted.

Top: Love-in-a-mist.  
photo Sandra Pullman

Bottom: Heritage  
apples ripening,  
La Trobe's Cottage.  
photo Sandra Pullman



## Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Dr Dianne Reilly for her guidance in writing this two-part article.

## Notes

- 1 Advertiser [Adel], Friends of La Trobe's Cottage, Garden Page, The genus *Latrobea* [www.foltc.latrobesociety.org.au/documents/GardenGenusLatrobea.pdf](http://www.foltc.latrobesociety.org.au/documents/GardenGenusLatrobea.pdf)
- 2 Friends of La Trobe's Cottage, Garden Page, *Derwentia perfoliata* [www.foltc.latrobesociety.org.au/documents/Derwentia%20perfoliata.pdf](http://www.foltc.latrobesociety.org.au/documents/Derwentia%20perfoliata.pdf).
- 3 Friends of La Trobe's Cottage, Garden Page, Charles La Trobe and Ferdinand Mueller [www.foltc.latrobesociety.org.au/Mueller.html](http://www.foltc.latrobesociety.org.au/Mueller.html).

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- RW Home et al, eds (1998) *Regardfully yours: selected correspondence of Ferdinand von Mueller, vol 1: 1840–1859*, Peter Lang, Bern.
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- C Anne Neale (2002) 'Picturesque' in R Aitken and M Looker, eds *The Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens*, Oxford University Press in association with the Australian Garden History Society, pp 473–4.
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The work of **Sandra Pullman** (graduate of Burnley 2005) with the Friends of La Trobe's Cottage won the historical interpretation category of the Victorian Community History Awards in 2014 for the La Trobe Cottage garden. Sandra is interested in early students at the Burnley School of Horticulture, and is doing a Master of Architecture (Research) at Deakin University on Burnley graduate Ina Higgins (1900).





Peter Crane

## Eastern obsession

With its unique leaves and astonishing life story, the ginkgo is one of the true stars in the botanical firmament. Fossils of its distinctive leaves show us that between about 200 and 100 million years ago the ginkgo and its extinct relatives were widespread across our planet, and that the single living species *Ginkgo biloba* is the last representative of a once much more diverse group of plants. The ginkgo is the classic botanical living fossil.

For anyone interested in plants it is not hard to come up with a 'bucket list' of natural wonders that need to be seen before you die: the giant Amazonian waterlily, the *Rafflesia* of Borneo, the bristlecone pines of the western United States, and the giant eucalypts of Tasmania. One of the privileges of a lifetime studying the world of

plants is the opportunity to track down some of these botanical celebrities in the wild. But plants that are just as special can also be found closer to home, including in our gardens, and none more so than the ubiquitous ginkgo.

### An extraordinary survival

The heyday of the ginkgo was in the Jurassic, but with the rise of flowering plants about 100 million years ago, the rich variety of ancient ginkgo-like plants began to decline. In the southern hemisphere the ginkgo is last seen about 60 million years ago. It hung on longer in the north, but as climates cooled, and as new kinds of plants and animals evolved, the ginkgo steadily lost ground. It was last seen in North America about 15 million years ago and disappeared from Europe about 2 million years ago. The ginkgo survives today, seemingly in two native populations, only in south-central and eastern China.

The autumn leaves of the ginkgo cover a pond at the Koishikawa Botanical Gardens of the University of Tokyo, Japan.

photo Peter Crane



Left: Bud burst on a ginkgo short shoot, showing the new leaves and the young ovules that will eventually mature into seeds.

Top right: A majestic ginkgo on the Vanderbilt Mansion Estate, Hyde Park, New York, USA.

Bottom right: The 'Five Generations Ginkgo', part of a potentially wild ginkgo population growing at the Tianmu Mountain Reserve, Zhejiang Province, China.

photos Peter Crane



Without the intervention of people, the ginkgo would probably have gone extinct, but it earned its reprieve about 1000 years ago when people in China first realised that despite the terrible smell of the rotting seed coat, the meat of a ginkgo seed was edible. These seeds soon became a prized delicacy and the tree was quickly planted in other parts of China. In medieval times the ginkgo was introduced to Japan and Korea. Ginkgo seeds are still a distinctive feature of Chinese, Japanese and Korean cuisine. They appear in many guises, in a stir-fry, as a snack, or as a garnish in elaborate deserts.

## Early cultivation

The ginkgo first became known to western science through the writings of Engelbert Kaempfer, a physician who visited Japan with the Dutch East India Company in the early 1690s. And only a few decades later, in the mid-18th century, ginkgo seeds found their way to Europe. A venerable early specimen from the 1760s is one of the most treasured of all the trees at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

Before the end of the 18th century the ginkgo had already been reintroduced to North America, and was growing in the garden of John Bartram just outside Philadelphia. In 1815 the ginkgo was

the focus for one of Goethe's most famous poems and by the 1850s the ginkgo had found its way to Australia. A specimen from 1859 in the Geelong Botanic Garden, now 16 metres tall and with a trunk over 4 metres around, is probably the largest ginkgo in Australia.

A peculiarity of the ginkgo is that it has distinct male and female trees, and because most of the oldest trees in the West took time to mature and turned out to be male, it was only in the second half of the 19th century that seed became widely available. The ginkgo was then planted as a horticultural novelty for its striking primrose-yellow autumn foliage. In 1892, scientific interest in the ginkgo also increased with the discovery that crucial details of its reproduction were unlike those of other trees. Many ginkgo trees planted on university campuses date from this period.

In Tokyo, following the fires of the 1928 Great Kanto earthquake, Japanese arborists recognised that the ginkgo was unusually resistant. It became a tree favoured for street plantings in Japan, and that enthusiasm for planting ginkgos in cities soon spread to many other places around the world. The ginkgo does well in tough urban settings. It is resistant to pests and diseases, and can tolerate a tough harsh winter, as long as the summer is correspondingly warm and moist. Ginkgos grow

well in Chicago and Toronto and are one of the most common street trees in Manhattan. Parts of Beijing and Seoul are veritable ginkgo forest.

Most recently the ginkgo has also found its way into the pharmacy. Extracts from ginkgo leaves perhaps provide protection against a failing memory, giving hope to many in the ageing populations of the western world. Ginkgo is now one of the most popular of herbal remedies found in health food stores from Berlin to San Francisco.

The ginkgo is now so commonplace that it is easily taken for granted. But just a moment's reflection reminds us that the ginkgo is one of the botanical wonders of the world: a living link to the age of dinosaurs. To borrow a phrase from Darwin, the ginkgo is a 'platypus for the plant kingdom'.

## A life of the ginkgo

About five years ago, as a distraction from my academic pursuits, I set out to write the evolutionary and cultural life story of the ginkgo. Since then I have had the opportunity to speak to many groups about the ginkgo, across the US and also in Europe, and I have come to understand what a special relationship many people have to this extraordinary tree. I have seen ginkgo leaves pressed like precious love letters between the pages of medieval manuscripts and 21st century paperbacks. I have met people with a ginkgo leaf motif etched into their wedding ring, and not a few with a ginkgo tattoo. The ginkgo is also among the most widely used commemorative trees. Several ginkgo trees that survived near the epicentre of the Hiroshima blast are revered as poignant symbols of hope and resilience. In 2009 Her Majesty the Queen planted a ginkgo to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and across the Hudson from where the Twin Towers once stood a grove of ginkgo trees commemorates those who were lost.

What accounts for the depth and strength of the connection between the ginkgo and people? Part of it surely has to do with our deep-seated affinity for trees. But with the ginkgo there is more. For many of us the ginkgo seems to be special. It invokes a sense of timelessness, beauty and wonder. For me there is a sense of grandeur and awe that comes from knowing that the ginkgo is a fragile living connection to the distant past. The ginkgo existed long before the appearance of our own species and it puts our own time in proper perspective.

## Known and unknown

Last November our scientific understanding of the ginkgo took a major leap forward with the publication of the first full sequence of the ginkgo genome. This was a huge effort — the ginkgo genome is about 80 times larger than the first plant genome to be sequenced in 2000. We now know that it contains 41,860 annotated genes. But does this intimate knowledge diminish our feeling of wonder about this marvellous tree? For me the answer is no. Plants like the ginkgo, Amazonian water-lilies, and bristlecone pines have a presence that is undiminished by scientific understanding. And new discoveries only open up new questions. As Einstein once said, 'What I see in Nature is a magnificent structure that we can comprehend only very imperfectly, and that must fill a thinking person with a feeling of "humility".'

In the face of the ginkgo life story, full of evolutionary twists and turns and played out over millions of years through the vicissitudes of billions of individual lives, it seems that Einstein had it right. There will always be much that remains beyond our grasp. The ginkgo reminds us that as we consider our collective future as part of the natural world, humility not hubris should be our guide.



A mature ginkgo resplendent in its brimstone yellow autumn foliage.

photo Peter Crane

**Sir Peter Crane FRS** is president of the Oak Spring Garden Foundation and until recently was the Carl W. Knobloch, Jr. Dean of the Yale University School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. In 2014 Dr Crane received the prestigious International Prize for Biology, administered by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, for his work on the evolutionary history of plants. He began writing *Ginkgo: the tree that time forgot* (Yale University Press 2013, and highly recommended) while he was director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, where a ginkgo grows not far from the director's house.



Anne Cochrane

## *Olive Pink today*

Entrance to the Olive Pink Botanic Garden, Alice Springs, 2016.  
photo Anne Cochrane

The Northern Territory garden bearing her name is named after Olive Muriel Pink, born in Hobart in 1884. Olive Pink was a skilled botanical artist and an anthropologist. The development of the garden came about as a result of her lobbying for a flora reserve in Alice Springs. The Arid Regions Native Flora Reserve was gazetted in 1956, and Ms Pink was appointed as its first honorary curator. The reserve, renamed the Olive Pink Botanic Garden in 1996, was the first arid zone gardens in the southern hemisphere.

Olive Pink studied anthropology at Sydney University in the 1930s. She was a frequent visitor to Alice Springs and worked in remote communities with the Warlpiri and Arrernte people. She was considered a colourful character who championed the rights of Indigenous people at a time when few other people did. In 1940, at the age of 56, Olive moved permanently to central Australia, living in the Tanami Desert for several years.

She died on 6 July 1975 in Alice Springs, and was buried there. It was not until 1985 that the Olive Pink Flora Reserve opened to the

public. The garden now grows more than 600 central Australian plants including bush tucker plants, medicinal plants, threatened species, and water-wise garden plants.

### **A recent visit**

On my visit in June 2016, it seemed that the garden looked a bit tired, but my walking companion advised me that a recent spate of locust activity had caused extensive damage to vegetation around Alice Springs. In addition, the area had endured a hailstorm a week earlier, the likes of which had not been seen for the past 20 years. More than 60 mm of rain had fallen on the town, leaving the Todd River in flood and powerlines down, trees blown over and considerable damage to houses and facilities. No wonder the gardens looked a little the worse for wear!

The locusts and hail didn't mar the splendid views of Alice Springs, the Todd River and the landscape of the surrounding MacDonnell Ranges from Annie Myers Hill (or Tharrarltneme), the highest point in the garden. This is not too strenuous a walk but care needs to be taken with the rocky steps and path if you aren't too steady on your feet.





- 1&2 There are many places for sitting throughout the garden.
- 3 The Todd River in flood across the causeway that leads to Olive Pink Botanic Garden.
- 4 Outdoor seating at the garden's cafe.
- 5&6 Sculptures in the garden.

photos Anne Cochrane

A good network of short walking trails has been set up in the garden. Visitors can take a self-guided walk using a small booklet (\$5 by donation). The walks mainly introduce visitors to local eucalypts and wattles, though there are emu bushes (*Eremophila*), bush oranges (*Capparis* sp.) and a large range of other plants as well. Little was in flower on my visit but I am sure at other times of the year the garden would be more colourful. There are plenty of signs, unfortunately some illegible and badly in need of replacement. The marvellous thing is that there are shelters and ample seating provided along the trails for tired legs and for picnics. There are also a number of interesting sculptures in evidence.

The Bean Tree Cafe in the garden provides a shady setting for breakfast, lunch or simply coffee and cake. We enjoyed watching the antics of the avian visitors in the garden. A spotted bower bird and a group of grey-crowned babblers were the highlights of my birdwatching.

Olive Pink Botanic Garden is a nice place to stroll through, to relax, to watch birds and to learn something about the flora of Central Australia's arid zone. Since its creation, other similar botanic gardens or arid-zone areas within gardens have been created.

## Australian arid-zone plants

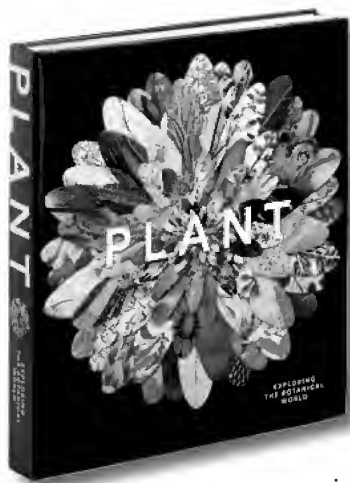
Some of these gardens — like the Olive Pink Botanic Garden — feature Australian native arid-zone plants: the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden at Port Augusta (South Australia), and the Red Centre garden of the Australian National Botanic Gardens in Canberra. Others such as the Arid Zone and Cactus House at Mt Coot-ha in Brisbane have central America and African arid-zone plants.

The Garden, a not-for-profit community organisation, relies on Friends and supporters to help fund its running. It is generally open 7 days a week from 8am to 4pm. It is easily accessible from the centre of Alice Springs, virtually on the banks of the Todd River and just up the road from some of the major hotels, and has a comprehensive website (<http://opbg.com.au/>) with information on Ms Pink herself, the garden plants, and the walking trails.

**Dr Anne Cochrane** is a senior research scientist with the Department of Parks and Wildlife, Western Australia. She manages the Threatened Flora Seed Centre, a seed bank for the conservation of rare, threatened and poorly known native plant species from Western Australia, and is currently researching the impact of a warming drying climate on the ability of seeds to germinate.

# For the bookshelf

Phaidon Press Editors *Plant: exploring the botanical world*



2016 Phaidon Press hardback, 352 pp, 300 illus, \$79.95

After Phaidon's much sought-after publication *The gardener's garden* (2014), which featured a beautifully curated selection of gardens, some from our very own Richard Aitken and Christine Reid, *Plant: exploring the botanical world* showcases the extraordinary beauty and diversity of plants throughout the ages.

This large hardcover is filled with some of the most amazing images, from breathtakingly detailed botanical illustrations to state of the art scientific photography. It features an image of the oldest surviving medieval manuscript, from 512 AD, and others ranging from the never before published sketches of Charles Darwin to a Japanese inspired illustration from architect and designer Charles Rennie Mackintosh and a pencil drawing of a sweet pea by artist Ellsworth Kelly.

With a layout based throughout on contrasts and similarities, the 300 botanical images are presented in the same vein as those great Phaidon publications *The house book* (2004) and *The garden book* (2005). One perfect image accompanies the matching explanatory text – the factual information you desire, along with anecdotal information. The 'celebrity plant' thale cress (*Arabidopsis thaliana*), for example, was the first plant to have its entire genome sequenced and to undergo an entire lifecycle in space, leading to further scientific investigation of gravity on genes and how we may grow plant in space!

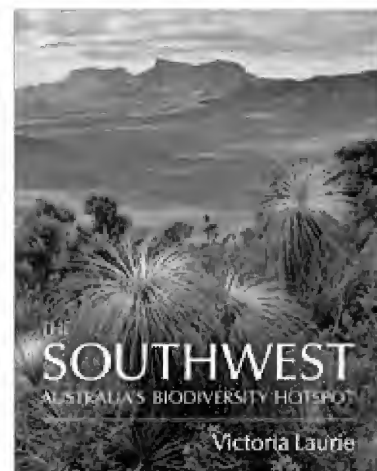
It is a great reference book too, with a detailed timeline at the back which takes you through the evolution of botanical images, showcasing the history and culture of plants. This book is a must-have for anyone passionate about plants, art, science and nature.

**Phoebe LaGerche-Wijsman** has a landscape architecture background. She has been AGHS's national executive officer for five years, and will be greatly missed when she takes up a new job elsewhere this month. (NB We will have space for a special thank-you to Phoebe in the next issue of *Australian Garden History*.)

Victoria Laurie *The Southwest: Australia's biodiversity hotspot*

2015 UWA Publishing (Perth) paperback, 232 pp, \$45

In this book, Laurie recounts conversations with a veritable who's who of people living and working in Western Australia's South-West. She reveals a stunning landscape filled with amazing plants and enigmatic wildlife, taking the reader through the riches of the South-West ecoregion by ecoregion, from Perth and the Swan Coastal Plains to the Peaks, Sandplains, Goldfields and beyond. You can feel Laurie's excitement as she entices the reader to look beyond the usual haunts of the region to see the intricacies of nature across the landscape, from the city to the heavily cleared agricultural wheat belt to the coastal plains and offshore waters.



Laurie has done a phenomenal amount of research into the South-West, using historical accounts from early explorers and settlers, and providing details of the geology of the region and the evolution and biology of its unique flora and fauna. This is no dry account of the biota of one of the world's biodiversity hotspots; it is a colourful journey through a rich and resilient landscape, yet one that is fragile and in need of care. There is some stunning photography to match Laurie's language, sometimes verging on melodramatic but always conjuring visions of a special place.

The book is both disturbing and reassuring; references to biodiversity decline are frequent, but Laurie doesn't dwell long on the negative, rather focusing on what we can do, and are doing, to prevent further losses.

Nevertheless, her final chapter is somewhat disquieting, as it conjures up a reality of seemingly unstoppable urban development, native animals behind fences and seeds in temperature-controlled vaults. Expressing this uncertain future for a region of such immense biological importance is sobering, but hopefully

these scenes might shake us from complacency and change our attitudes towards conserving this treasure of a region. If you hadn't already realised the unique richness of Australia's South-West, then after reading Laurie's book, you will! I hope this book inspires people to get out and experience what the region has to offer.

**Anne Cochrane** is a senior research scientist with the Department of Parks and Wildlife, Western Australia.

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**Stephen Anderton** *Lives of the great gardeners* 2016 Thames and Hudson (London) hardback, 304 pp, 247 illus, £24.95

When I was studying art history many decades ago I fell in love with the wonderful book written in the mid-16th century by Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the most excellent painters, sculptors, and architects*. Now we have a similar project by Stephen Anderton, and it is done well.

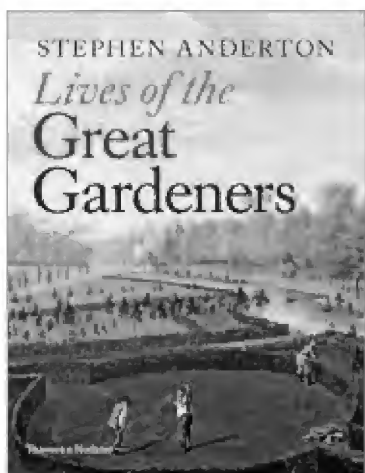
Anderton is the garden writer for *The Times* and has spent years working in gardens in both restoration and management. His writing is punchy and engaging and he has avoided doing what Vasari did, ensuring he himself appears as

one of the great artists. Still, he did not work for Cosimo di Medici, where a little self-publicity was pretty important to get the next gig!

He is also much more eclectic than Vasari who only really wrote about Florentines. Anderton covers the world and our

own Edna Walling gets due respect. Of course his choices are his own and all of us could add or subtract a few. But when you go from Wen Zhengming (working in China at the same time as Vasari in Florence) to Charles Jencks and Piet Oudolf in the 21st century you have covered a lot of turf (ouch, particularly in Jencks' case!).

The structure is engaging too, grouping the designers into 'Gardens of ideas', 'of straight lines', 'of curves', and finally 'Gardens of plantsmanship'. The book is well illustrated,



though in the case of Edna Walling I think he could have done better. There is an excellent further reading section, which is essential when each entry is only 4–6 pages of text, but I thought that with one or two of the designers mentioned he might have chosen differently here too. In the excellent chapter on FL Olmsted, for example, he omits the wonderful biography by Witold Rybczynski, *A clearing in the distance*.

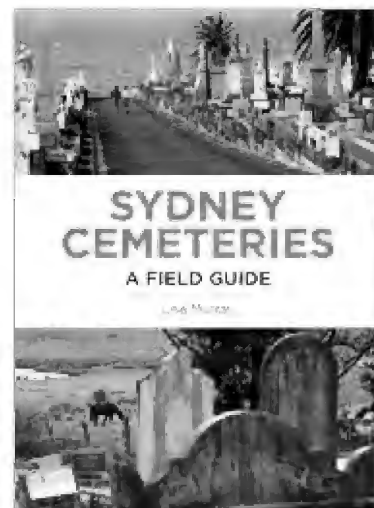
As a quick reference tool this needs to be in any garden historian's collection — alongside the *Oxford Companion*.

**Max Bourke AM** is a former deputy chair of AGHS with agricultural science training and a career in the arts and heritage.

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**Lisa Murray** *Sydney cemeteries: a field guide* 2016 NewSouth, paperback, 400 pp, \$34.99

'I love cemeteries', writes City of Sydney historian and taphophile Lisa Murray. Visiting the open spaces which constitute our cemeteries to admire the headstones and enjoy their park-like spaces has long been a Sydney tradition. This guide is a handbook for exploring the city's cemeteries today, from crowded inner-city plots to spacious burial grounds in semi-rural spots. It covers the history and heritage of 101 public cemeteries in Sydney, listing notable and notorious burials, but going beyond this with short essays on topics such as the evolution of cemetery design in Sydney, Australian expressions of the European garden cemetery movement, changing architectural style of headstones and changes in styles of managing cemeteries. Ryan lists her 'top five' cemeteries in various categories — for picnics, for example, and birdwatching, admiring views, seeing the oldest ones (the oldest of all is St John's, Parramatta, with burials from 1790).



# Profile: The publishing team



Bernadette [left] and Mariana [right] at the National Arboretum Canberra.

photo Grace Plunkett

## Tell us a little bit about yourself

The editor – Bernadette Hince

I'm a science editor, and I write. In my spare time I write historical dictionaries of polar words (for enjoyment). You might find it hard to imagine just how much fun it is to write dictionaries, but it's exhilarating.

The designer – Mariana Rollgejser

It was about 1992 when Max Bourke called me and asked if I wanted to do a little job for him, *Studies in Australian Garden History Volume 1*, and from then there have been many wonderful and diverse projects.

## What does your work involve now?

Bernadette

Mostly *Australian Garden History*! At the beginning of 2015, friends (including Max and Margie Bourke!) told me about the search for a new editor for the journal, someone to step into the giant shoes of Richard Aitken and Christina Dyson.

I knew about AGHS, and I've always been interested in people, plants and history (and big shoes). I really wanted the job, it sounded ideal for me. I didn't know what I'd say but I rang Mariana just to say hello. When I admitted this in the interview, I couldn't tell whether people were appalled or impressed that I'd been so forward.

Putting an issue of the journal together is always a challenge: it's like choreography of words and pictures, a massive exercise in coordination and collaboration. I love the work, and Mariana is a dream to work with – as readers can see, she's also a genius designer.

Mariana

Besides the journal I do a variety of projects that often entwine AGHS members in various other guises: the Southern Tablelands Ecosystems Park at the National Arboretum in Canberra, and the Friends of the National Arboretum there, as well as other design projects around the place. I love design and the challenge of new projects. I especially love when I commence a new project with new clients, and then discover that we have common links through other people ... Canberra is like that!

When I heard that Richard and Christina were moving on from their editing role for the journal I was quite sad. I knew I would miss them. They were so terrific to work with. I was slightly worried about who the new editor might be ... and then I got a call, 'Hello, my name is Bernadette ...'

When the national conference was in Canberra last year, I had the greatest delight in meeting so many people who write for the journal.

## And your own garden?

Bernadette

Is two or three years old. My house used to be public housing and there wasn't much outside it. It's a great feeling to make a new garden.

Mariana

I confess, I love pruning. Sometimes my husband resorts to hiding the pruning shears and saw.

When we moved to [the Canberra suburb of] Macgregor 22 years ago, he decreed we were only to have natives, with the exception of a seasonal veggie garden. My main contribution to that is watering and ensuring that the crop is picked with good timing, and then to the business of cooking. This summer I lost my battle with the local possum, who beat me to half of the very best corn crop we have ever had!

## I will, if you will

Bernadette

When I asked Mariana if she'd consider doing this Profile, she said, yes, if you'll be there too. It's a great combination – I learn a lot every time I do an issue, but I'll never have her designer's eye.

Mariana

When Bernadette asked me if I would agree to this I was not delighted but she did persuade me! And I will never have her clever brain!



# Dialogue

## Commemorative tree planting in Hobart

Jennifer Stackhouse

An Atlantic cedar has been replanted in a historic garden in Hobart to mark the 250th birthday of colonial artist John Glover.

Tasmanian Governor, Her Excellency Professor The Honourable Kate Warner AC, planted the tree in the garden of Stanwell Hall, West Hobart, once Glover's home. The tree replaces one known as 'The Glover Tree', which grew in the garden until it was felled by a storm in 2009. The young cedar was depicted in one of the earliest overviews of Hobart, which was painted in 1832 by Glover and titled 'Hobart Town, taken from the garden where I lived'.

As well as showing the young Atlantic cedar, Glover's painting reveals a large garden filled with plantings of roses, geraniums and fruit trees in flower.

Stanwell Hall is now the home of Douglas and Jenny Armati, who opened the garden over the weekend of 18–19 February 2017 to mark the 250th anniversary of Glover's birth on 18 February 1767. The Georgian-style house has been extended and altered since Glover's time, and the garden too has changed, but the property retains much of the panoramic view across the riverside city of Hobart.



Top: 'Hobart Town, taken from the garden where I lived', oil painting, John Glover 1832. Glover's inscription on the back of the painting reads

*'Hobart Town, taken from the garden where I lived – The Geraniums, Roses etc. will give some idea how magnificent the Garden may be had here – Government House is to the left of the Church, the Barracks on the eminence to the right. John Glover'.*

Dixon Galleries, State Library of NSW



Middle: The Atlantic cedar planted by Tasmania's Governor in February 2017 to replace the 185-year-old tree that appeared in the early view of Hobart painted in 1832.

photo Jennifer Stackhouse

Far left: (Left to right) Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Kate Warner AC, Governor of Tasmania, Mr Douglas Armati (owner of Stanwell Hall), Mr Richard Warner, Mrs Jenny Armati, and the Aide-de-Camp to the Governor, on the occasion of the tree-planting.

## 2017 Landscape Australia conference

A one-day conference exploring the dynamic role of landscape in the design, planning and management of gardens, cities and regions will be held in Sydney next month. The 2017 Landscape Australia conference will take place at the Museum of Sydney on Saturday 6 May 2017. Sessions will examine:

- the role of aesthetics in contemporary garden and planting design. Speakers Thomas Woltz (USA), Andy Hamilton (UK/NZ), Katrina Simon (Australia)
- Indigenous management of the Australian landscape before European colonisation, and contemporary landscape architectural examples from New Zealand that interpret conflicted histories of place through design. Speakers Bill Gammage (Australia), Ralph Johns (NZ), Frances Wyld (Australia)
- urban resilience, a topic which is gaining prominence globally with rapid urbanisation combined with more frequent and extreme weather events. Speakers Sylvia Karres (NL), Alexis Sanal (Turkey), Claire Martin (Australia).

The conference is co-located with two other meetings: the Australian Institute of Architects National Architecture Conference 'Praxis', and the Planning Institute of Australia's National Congress 'Growing up, growing out'. See [LandscapeAustralia.com/conference](http://LandscapeAustralia.com/conference); tickets via Eventbrite.

# Diary dates

For further details on events, please see the AGHS website or contact the relevant branch.

## ACT Monaro Riverina

### Sunday 30 April 2017

Living and working in 19th century Canberra

2.30–4.30pm Heritage Festival joint event with National Trust ACT to visit two heritage sites in Belconnen. Guided ramble to two early settlements on the Limestone Plains – the Charnwood Homestead site in Fraser, and Palmerville in McKellar. Limited numbers, \$10, booking/enquiries National Trust office 02 6239 9533, [info@nationaltrustact.org.au](mailto:info@nationaltrustact.org.au).

### Friday 12 May 2017

Self-drive visit to Bundarbo Station and Jugiong area

Bundarbo Station (1847, Henry Osborne) dates back to the earliest years of settlement on the Murrumbidgee River. Bundarbo was typical of the era – the school house, stables, gardener's hut and other outbuildings testify that dozens of families once lived there and depended on Bundarbo for their livelihood. Edna Walling developed a special friendship with the Osbornes in the 1950s. Enquiries 02 6284 4749, [ellioth@bigpond.net.au](mailto:ellioth@bigpond.net.au).

### Thursday 15 June 2017

Talk 'The garden in the ancient Roman World: what we can learn from Pompeii and Herculaneum', Emeritus Prof Elizabeth Minchin  
5.45 for 6pm, enquiries 02 6284 4749, [ellioth@bigpond.net.au](mailto:ellioth@bigpond.net.au).

## Sydney and Northern New South Wales

### Saturday 20 May 2017 TBC

Visit to St Thomas's Anglican Church, Enfield

1.30–4 pm. St Thomas's cemetery, designed by John Frederick Hill and built in 1849, has many graves and headstones of pioneer families. Members \$20, guests \$30 incl light refreshments (afternoon tea in a member's garden in Burwood). Bookings essential, venue confirmed on booking. Bookings and enquiries email [Jeanne@Villani.com](mailto:Jeanne@Villani.com).

## South Australia

### Sunday 30 April 2017

Nor' West Bend Station – day trip exploring SA rural settlement

9am–5.30pm. A trip for garden lovers and history enthusiasts, this event is included in the National Trust Heritage Festival program. \$75 (incl lunch & a/t). Booking essential [www.trybooking.com/ORRY](http://www.trybooking.com/ORRY). Contact Elizabeth Ganguly, 0409 679 944.

### Thursday 18 May 2017

'Australia's Influential Garden People'. Illustrated talk by Dr Anne Vale

6.30–8.30pm. Discover what has influenced Australia's 'mind shapers and garden creators' and hear how they are influencing contemporary garden making. \$8, booking essential at [www.trybooking.com/ORSA](http://www.trybooking.com/ORSA). Contact Andrew Plumer, 0401 124 004.

## Victoria

### Monday 10 April 2017

Autumn lecture 'Putting Mount Boninyong homestead garden into context'

6pm for 6.30pm – Mueller Hall, National Herbarium, Birdwood Avenue South Yarra. Eight generations, one garden. Family stories and historical overview as told by the owner and the historian. Members \$20, non-members \$25, students \$10. Book on [www.trybooking.com/NZZP](http://www.trybooking.com/NZZP). Enquiries Lorraine Powell, [lorraineepowell@gmail.com](mailto:lorraineepowell@gmail.com).

### Sat 22 April 2017

Working bee at Mooleric, Birregurra  
10am. Contact Fran Faul 03 9853 1369, [franfaul@gmail.com](mailto:franfaul@gmail.com).

### Monday 18 May 2017

Autumn Lecture Alistair Watt 'Robert Fortune – a plant hunter in the Orient'

6 pm for 6.30pm, Mueller Hall, National Herbarium, Birdwood Avenue South Yarra. Alistair Watt talks about the great Scottish plant collector Robert Fortune.

## Tasmania

Enquiries Lynne Paul, [tahara7@bigpond.com](mailto:tahara7@bigpond.com), further details to be advised for both these events.

### Friday 21 April 2017

Wychwood Nursery and Old Wesley Dale

New owners David Doukidis and Matt Bendall will guide us through **Wychwood** garden, with plantings of rare and heritage apple orchards, roses and perennials and many beautiful cool-climate trees.

Deb and Scott Wilson started to create the garden of **Old Wesley Dale** (1861) in 2001, around some wonderful old trees including birches, liquidambers and poplars.

### Sunday 27 May 2017

Talk 'The Australian Garden at Cranbourne: the process of design', Paul Thompson

2pm Runnymede. Thompson's 40 years of landscape design includes 7 botanic gardens, including Cranbourne.

### Sunday 25 June 2017

Lecture by Stuart Read

New Zealand-born landscape architect and horticulturist Stuart Read specialises in cultural heritage, focusing on landscape design, parks, gardens and plants.



Nor' West Bend Station homestead from a sketch by Mrs L Hines, based on an old photograph or sketch.  
State Library of South Australia

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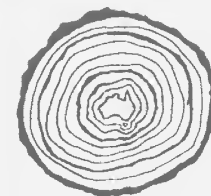
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*Australian Garden History* welcomes contributions of any length up to 1200 words. Prospective contributors are strongly advised to contact the editor before submitting text or images.

The views expressed in this journal are those of the contributors and are not necessarily shared by the Australian Garden History Society.

# AGHS news

## AGHS Melbourne conference 27–29 October 2017

A 2017 AGHS conference on the theme ‘Marvellous Melbourne – under Constant Change’ will be held at the State Library of Victoria, Melbourne. There will be one day of lectures on Friday 27 October, garden tours on Saturday 28 – Sunday 29 October 2017, and an optional day tour on Monday 30 October.

I thank Lorraine Powell (Victorian branch chair), Lisa Tuck (conference coordinator) and all those involved within the Victorian branch for stepping up to take on the considerable challenge of organising a most stimulating program on the dates originally scheduled for the year’s conference.

Lynne Walker has agreed to lead a tour of New Zealand’s South Island (approx 14 days) as a post-conference tour. It will leave Melbourne on Tuesday 31 October 2017; full details of the itinerary and costs will be released as soon as possible.

**Richard Heathcote**

## Northern NSW oral history project

AGHS’s Northern NSW sub-branch oral history project has developed from the germ of an idea over the past six months. It aims to create an archival collection of digitally recorded oral histories that document the memories of individuals involved with creating, maintaining and/or visiting gardens in the New England region. It is anticipated that interviews will help document an understanding of the development of historic gardens, record the various award schemes that have given some gardens prestige and publicity, and record the role and influence of various open garden schemes.

As part of the project, Associate Professor Janis Wilton gave a two-day training workshop on the weekend of 4–5 March 2017 at Armidale’s Heritage Centre, under the auspices of Bill Oates (University of New England archivist, and AGHS’s Northern NSW chair). Ten members attended the workshop which covered the objectives of the project, developing appropriate engagement techniques and practical interviewing skills. It also discussed the importance of obtaining informed consent from interviewees, secure storage for recorded interviews, making a documented summary of each interview, and electronic access to interviews.

Participants brought with them considerable professional skills and a wide variety of life experiences as well as a shared love of garden history. The course provides the project with a group of enthusiastic volunteers to begin to record the rich resources that are known to the society.

## Congratulations to Lainie Lawson OAM!

AGHS member Lainie Lawson has received the Order of Australia Medal for services to horticultural history in the 2017 Australia Day Honours List. Lainie has been a member of AGHS since 1980, serving on the committee several times, and has recently completed three years as an elected member of AGHS’s national management committee. She is a heritage consultant and former senior curator of historic places in the ACT, including Lanyon, Calthorpe’s House, and Mugga-Mugga, and has been involved with Open Gardens Australia, the Australiana Fund, and the Historic Houses Trust of NSW.



Participants (anticlockwise around table from rear left) Owen Croft, Jenny Sloman, Angela Brown, Graham Wilson OAM (back to camera, project chair), John Maurer, Marilyn Pidgeon OAM, Liz Chappell, Bill Oates (partly obscured, Northern NSW sub-branch chair) Assoc Prof Janis Wilton (presenter).  
photo Roslyn Burge

Other members who were unable to attend the workshop will be encouraged to participate through appropriate training and mentoring. In addition, the project will record the development of AGHS’s Northern NSW sub-branch from its initial meeting to the present. Fundamental in this will be recording the development of the Heritage Rose Garden at Saumarez Homestead as the group’s previous major project. We expect that a rich social history will unfold as the project grows and develops. A manual from the workshop is being refined for distribution to participants. One of the intangible outcomes expected from the workshop is the continuing growth in member involvement in the society. There was clear evidence of a shared passion among participants to be involved in another significant and worthwhile project.

**Graham Wilson and John Maurer**



The Australian Garden History Society promotes awareness and conservation of significant gardens and cultural landscapes through engagement, research, advocacy and activities.